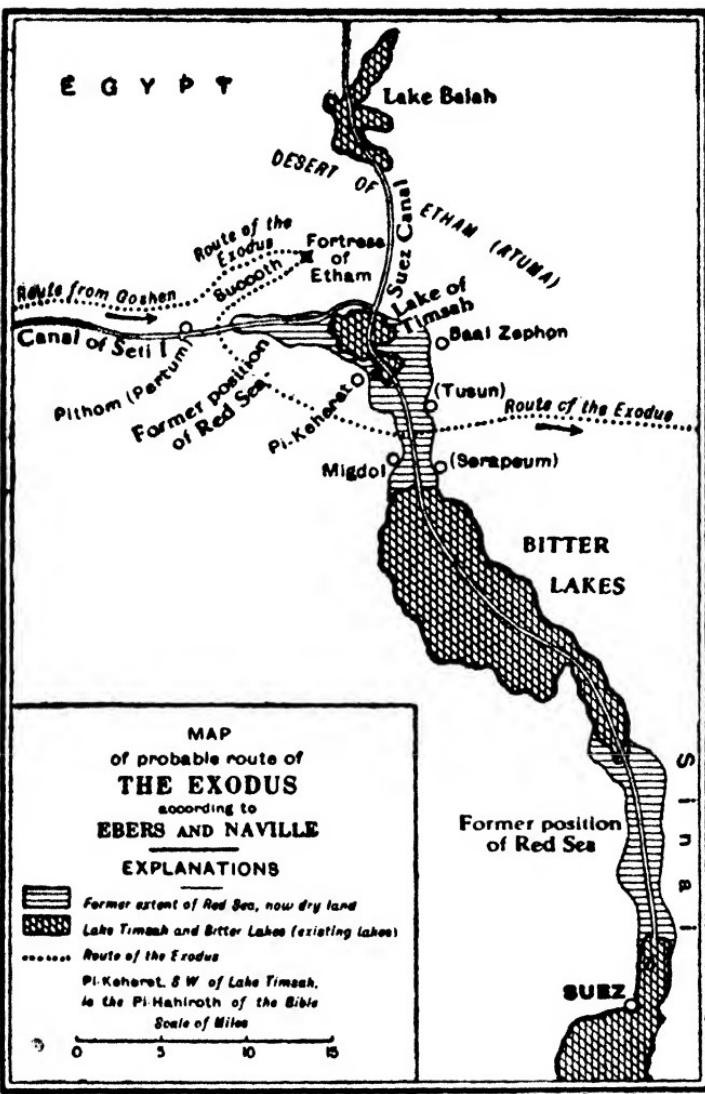
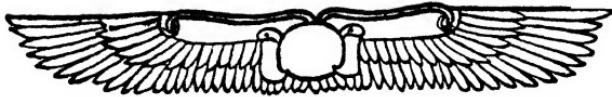


**THE HIDDEN TREASURES
OF EGYPT**





THE HIDDEN TREASURES OF EGYPT A ROMANCE

A Story of Love and Intrigue
at the Courts of the
Pharaohs

By
R. EUSTACE

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TO
MY BEST FRIEND
AND HELPMATE
MY WIFE

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Engravings are from photographs supplied by the kind courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.

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If by chance actual names of any living person be mentioned in this volume, it must be distinctly understood that no personal reflection is intended, as the characters are purely imaginary.

INTRODUCTION

BEING the copy of letters sent from the Nile by George Stafford to Frank Roland, of "Glen-hope," Nr. Lynton, Devon.

" DEAR FRANK,

" You may wonder what makes me stay so long at Thebes, until I tell you of the little adventure which occurred shortly after my arrival. While encamping at Luxor, I happened one moonlight night, to stroll among the ruins of the Palace and Temple,¹ and I was just leaving the site of the southern end of the Temple, when I heard the sound of digging, which evidently proceeded from where the inner sanctuary formerly stood. Approaching cautiously, I perceived a native lad working vigorously in a small pit, stopping at frequent intervals to examine the earth he was excavating. So intent was he on his labour, that he did not notice me until I spoke ; being startled, he looked up, but appeared relieved when he saw who it was, and, ceasing work, he said :—

" ' Ah, you are the Englishman who has encamped by the river. I trust, Sir, you will not tell the superintendent that you discovered me digging among the ruins ; my mother is ill, but being poor, I shall not be able to provide her with those comforts she requires, unless I am lucky enough to find some curios which I may be able to dispose of.'

" ' Oh no, I won't mention it,' I replied, ' in fact, if you come across any genuine antiquities, I am quite

willing to purchase them at a reasonable figure, but I want no rubbish.'

"The lad, looking at me dubiously, said:—

"'I hope, Sir, you are not trying to lay a trap for a poor native, the punishment, of late, is severe on those selling antiquities.'

"'Nay, have no fear,' I replied, 'as I said, if you find anything of value, show it to me, and I will offer you what I can afford, and, whether we do business or not, no one will be the wiser.'

"Reassured, he sat down for a minute, then, undoing his loincloth, took from it a somewhat tarnished bracelet, which he handed me.

"'This,' he said, 'I found last week, secreted in a flat slab of stone, and I had hoped to have been able to have disposed of it before now, but the only dealer I care to trust is still away. Would you care to buy it?'

"'How much do you want?' I inquired, 'but, before I decide, can you let me see the piece of stone you mention?'

"'Yes, I expect so, Sir,' replied the lad,—'I threw it in yonder crevice,' and in a few minutes, he brought me a flat piece of marble about two-and-a-half feet square by three inches thick, at one side was a receptacle about six inches by one on the surface and several inches deep, which had evidently concealed a secret drawer.

"'Was this open when you found it?' I asked.

"'Oh no, the flat piece which fitted in there, was broken by my axe, and when I pulled the slab up, the bracelet slid out, and with it a necklace, which is at home.'

"'Well,' I said after examining the piece of jewellery carefully, 'I am willing to buy both, providing you do not require too much. What shall we say for the bracelet?'

" ' Would a hundred piastres² be too large an amount ? ' asked the youth in an anxious tone.

" ' Nay, it's worth much more. I am not rich, but I will willingly give you five hundred piastres and take my chance,' for I perceived it was inlaid with precious stones and had the appearance of being made of fine gold.

" ' Well, you are a gentleman,' replied the lad in amazement, ' a dealer would either have tried to beat me down, or grudgingly have paid me what I asked.'

" ' You accept then ? '

" ' Thankfully, Sir.'

" ' Then come to my camp and I will give you the money at once.'

" ' If you don't mind, Sir, I will call to-morrow, on my return from work ; it might cause suspicion, if I happened to be seen entering your tent by night, besides, before I leave, I must carefully cover over with slabs the place where I have been digging.'

" ' Well, just as you like,' I replied, ' in the meantime, I won't run away.'

" ' Ah, Sir, I trust you ;—if there were more fair-dealing men about here like yourself, it would make us poor natives far straighter, and this part of the world a better place to live in.'

" I was pleased with his reply, for I find it is generally the scamp who distrusts his fellow men. I placed the bracelet in my inner pocket, and with some difficulty managed to carry the slab of marble to my camp, where I found my servant half asleep, waiting to turn in.

" Having dismissed him, I sat some time examining, by the light of my lamp, the antique bracelet I had so happily acquired. With my knowledge of hieroglyphics, I had no difficulty in deciphering the inscription, ' Treasury of Ammon ' cut on the slab, which doubtless had been part of a marble chest belonging to the Temple treasury.

INTRODUCTION

"The bracelet, I found, on testing it, to be of pure gold, and from its weight and size had evidently been made for a man. In design it was extremely simple, being a series of oblong plates, about two inches by one and the third-of-an-inch thick; every plate being attached to its fellow by links at the ends and centre of each side; in the middle of every plate was embedded a large gem, and in each corner was one of smaller dimensions.

"I am not a good judge as to the value of jewellery, appreciating it mostly on account of the beauty of workmanship or its historical associations; but I knew sufficient to be certain that it was of far greater value than the price I had arranged to pay.

"While turning it over in the light, I noticed on the inside of the plates, what at first appeared to be merely scratches, but which, with the aid of my magnifying glass, I found to be minute hieroglyphics forming the words 'Seek, if you would find.'

"Seek where? I asked myself, and I began to think that perhaps this jewel was meant to convey some secret message.

"I had little sleep that night; and, on awakening, my mind re-echoed the words 'Seek, if you would find.' I again examined the bracelet, for it suddenly occurred to me, that perhaps on this bracelet itself might be found the answer.

"Continuing my search during the day, I discovered, by the aid of my glass, a small hieroglyphic figure on the top and bottom sides of each plate, but for a long time I was unable to make any sense of these, till at last, by reading it from top to bottom alternately, I translated the words 'Four cubits' under the Naos of Ammon.'

"Here at last was a definite instruction. But which Naos? Did it allude to the 'Holy of Holies' at the

great Temple of 'Epet,'⁴ or to that of Luxor—or might it not equally apply to one of the sanctuaries on the western side of the city?

" Being an invalid I asked myself. How can I dig to the depth of four cubits?—and if I employed native labour, it would undoubtedly come to the knowledge of the Egyptian officials.

" Then I remembered the youth who was going to call during the evening, and when he arrived, by offering good wages, I arranged with him to leave his present employment as shepherd, and work at nights for me, resting by day in my spare tent.

" He had brought with him a most ancient-looking necklace of very beautiful design and richly studded with gems, for which I gave him the same amount as for the bracelet; for it appeared to me to be of even greater value.

" I considered it most probable that the 'Naos' in question was the one belonging to the Temple of Luxor, in which the marble slab had been discovered; and during three nights, the lad and I dug under the site of the 'Holy of Holies' in that sanctuary; but, without result; our most difficult task being in daily removing and replacing the heavy blocks of stone, which we lodged over the place we had excavated, so that, during the day, it might escape the notice of any chance passers through the ruins.

" On the fourth night, however, our perseverance was rewarded by discovering a small stone chest about eighteen inches square. I abandoned further search for that night, and, after re-covering our trench, I returned direct to my tent with the prize.

" I had, however, to wait till the next day before I could satisfy my curiosity, for I found that it was impossible to open the stone lid without considerable hammering, which would pass unnoticed during the

daytime, but at night might cause curiosity or inquiry.

" On the outside of the chest was the inscription 'Treasury of Ammon' similar to that cut on the marble slab previously found ; this greatly raised my spirits, and next morning, as soon as the sound of work had commenced in the village and surrounding huts, I knew I could safely hammer to my heart's content, without attracting attention.

" After much chipping, I was enabled to insert an iron wedge, by which I eventually forced the chest open. Imagine, however, my disappointment when, instead of discovering jewels, gold or even silver, I simply found a bundle of closely written papyri ; inside the bundle, but enclosed in several unused sheets, was a map and a strip of papyrus. The latter gave me a faint hope of ultimately finding something of value, for on it was written :—

" ' In secreting the accompanying records, I feel it may be ages before they are again seen by human eye ; in any case, when that time comes, much will have happened ; even the foundations of the "Holy of Holies" in this Temple of Luxor must be disturbed, before it renders up its secret.

" ' I can hardly realize how this can come to pass, but if the finder, after reading the record of how and why the treasures were hidden, still persists in continuing the search, then, if my place of rest has been respected, he will find in my sarcophagus the chart showing how to reach the tomb in which this enormous wealth lies hidden.

" ' But let him beware ! Death has in most cases claimed those who have attempted to disturb the property of the dead. Even I, who would have only used it for the benefit of mankind, have promised never again to risk my life in attempting to move the cursed hoard.

" ' In my writings, I have at the same time attempted to give a brief description of what happened in Egypt

during my lifetime, also on account of the exodus of the Hebrews, who sojourned so long in our land, as it has been forbidden to mention on our monuments or public records anything connected with these foreigners, who have been such a curse to our country ; but I feel that in so doing, it may interest those who live in some future age, when even the very existence of the Israelitish nation will perhaps be forgotten.

“ Written in the tenth year of Rameses III, and secreted under the Naos of Ammon, in the Temple of Luxor, by Ptahmes, Third Prophet of Ammon, Piromis of the Temples of Thebes, and Prince of the North and the South.”

“ After reading this document, I next devoted my time in searching for the position of Ptahmes’s tomb, and, owing to the clearness of his directions, I had no difficulty in deciding on the situation at which the secret entrance should be found ; in order to avoid the curiosity of the Arabs, I encamped on the spot, and by thus enclosing the space, I was enabled to make my excavations in secrecy.

“ After removing an immense quantity of rubbish, I found the block of stone indicated in the diagram, and with the aid of my Irish attendant and the native lad, after the greatest difficulty we managed to pierce through the cement by which it was embedded in the rocky portal, and thus free the entry, which was only just large enough to crawl through. This led into a narrow passage about seven feet high by four feet broad. Taking with us lanterns, ropes and planks, we cautiously followed this passage which descended in a gradual slope for nearly a hundred and fifty yards, and terminated in a lofty central hall about fifty feet long by forty broad ; in the centre of which, on a raised platform, as indicated in the chart, rested the sarcophagus of Ptahmes ; around the walls stood some

handsomely carved ivory chairs, a chariot, and a large variety of costly furniture, large vases, and other valuable ornaments, amongst which I noticed some goblets of a beautifully coloured glass, similar to that which, but a few years back, was introduced on the European market as a modern invention. From this central hall branched off an entrance hall ornamented with pillars, and eight large elaborately decorated chambers, each containing several sarcophagi, also costly furniture and other prized possessions, which formerly belonged to those at rest around us. Having now thoroughly explored the vaults, I returned to the central chamber and with our combined efforts managed to raise the lid of Ptahmes's sarcophagus ; I was greatly relieved to find that a roll of papyri was on the top of the coffin, where it had been placed in accordance with the instructions mentioned in the papyrus I already possessed ; thus I was saved the unpleasantness of coming into contact with the remains of the dead.

" The newly found papyri gave full instructions how to reach the tomb wherein lay the treasures ; of these directions I send you a careful translation, so that if any mishap occurs to me, and you care to continue the search, you will find no difficulty in doing so ; if such a thing should happen, I believe you would find the native boy honest, but my Irish attendant is, I fear, tricky, and if the inducement was sufficient, might cause trouble ; he is one of those gentlemen who are quite straight as long as they are watched, or do not think it to their interest to do wrong.

" In your letter you grumble at the fogs you are enduring, but every country has its drawbacks,—here we have a broiling sun, hot winds and sand-storms ; flies annoy one by day, mosquitoes by night, and fleas at all times. Fever is at present so prevalent, that one can never know, in the morning, if one may not be taken

before night ; on such a thin thread do our little lives hang.

"Kindly have the manuscript of Ptahmes translated by one who will take the trouble to try and authenticate, by the monuments and the other existing records, the chief facts related.

"I notice there is much bitterness expressed against the Hebrews, which is only natural, the writer being a High Priest of Ammon ; it appears also, that some of the leading doctrines, preached in the present day, we owe to the Egyptians.

"I often, being on the spot, visit the sites of the buildings which are described and can understand how grand a city Thebes must have been in the days of Ptahmes ; in fact, so wrapt up am I at present, with what has occurred in this land, that, at nights, I often dream I am in the great metropolis of ancient Thebes, with its lofty buildings towering above me, and the countless multitudes hurrying to and fro ; and, on waking, half wonder if the past, or the present, is the dream ; and when broad day shows me the desolation which now reigns in the plain of Thebes,⁵ I cannot help thinking how Ptahmes would have grieved if he could now see what utter ruin has befallen that beautiful city he so loved.

"It appears to me that Ptahmes, besides being a very brave, humane, and clever man, must have had an innate dislike to extol his own great actions ; for, when he describes how he saved the city of Memphis and the Empire from falling into the hands of rebels, and even released Pharaoh from the punishment he so justly deserved, he, like Cæsar, uses the third person, so as to keep his own personality as much as possible in the background.

"I send to you by a special friend, a parcel in which is secreted the ancient necklace of Queen Ast-nefert,

INTRODUCTION

which is alluded to in the MS., also the bracelet which formerly belonged to King Amenophis III. Kindly have them valued by a competent expert, and keep them until I return to England. To-morrow I leave here, sailing down the Nile to the place indicated on the chart, and hope to be able, in my next communication, to tell you of the success of my explorations. If, however, I lose my life in this adventure, then accept the jewels in remembrance of

Your sincere friend,

GEORGE STAFFORD.

Frank Roland, Esq..

P.S. Address to me c/o Sheikh Ibrahim, at Kenneh, on the Nile, EGYPT."

Reply from Frank Roland.

" Glenhope,"

Nr. Lynton, Devon.

" DEAR STAFFORD,

" I have arranged for the papyri to be carefully translated as you desire.

" Your jewels reached me in perfect safety ; and I have a firm offer of £3,000 for the bracelet, and £8,000 for the necklace. Why not accept this and return without further risking your life ? A hearty welcome, and a home, as long as you will give us the pleasure of your company, is always awaiting you at Glenhope. My sister sends her kindest regards in which joins

Your sincere friend,

FRANK ROLAND.

George Stafford, Esq..

PROLOGUE BY PTAHMES

EVENTS PAST AND PRESENT

WHEN the matters concerning which I, Ptahmes, High Priest of Karnac, Third Prophet of Ammon, and Piromis¹ of the temples of Net,² am about to write, Menenptah II, son of Rameses the Great, was King of Upper and Lower Egypt.

But before commencing to narrate what occurred, I think it better to mention some of the leading facts, which took place during the lifetime of Rameses, as they greatly influenced the events which followed ; and by chance, these lines may be read at some future period, when that which is now known to all the world, may be forgotten.

Rameses II had a long and prosperous reign. In character he was shrewd and decisive, but ambitious and selfish ; he allowed neither compassion nor friendship to hinder him from carrying out that which he considered to be for the good of the State ; and appeared to think little of the terrible misery and great loss of life caused by his incessant wars.

His troops, inured by the constant hardships of camp-life and battle-fields, easily subdued those nations whose pursuits rendered them ignorant of military tactics, and thus to his constant aggressions, did Rameses owe most of his victories.

Nevertheless on the north east, the Syrians and

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adjacent nations combined with the northern tribes to stop his invasions, and the Hittites were so successful, that Rameses had to enter into negotiations for peace. In the south, however, the whole of Ethiopia was subdued, and all the tribes bordering the deserts were forced to become vassals of the Egyptian King.

Rameses then built an immense fleet on the Red Sea to transport his victorious armies to the Indies and further coasts, and also constructed numerous vessels at Zan,⁴ by which he carried his troops to the northern countries.

At length, finding that no nations were worth further plundering, he proclaimed a universal peace, and turned his attention to constructing those great works which now serve as monuments to his name. Besides the immense store-cities of Per-tum⁴ and Rameses,⁴ he re-built Per-bast⁴ and reconstructed the beautiful city of Zan⁵; he also improved the great canal constructed by Seti I, which connects the Nile with the Red Sea; and built the great wall from Memphis to Pelusium.

In all these vast undertakings, he chiefly employed the Israelitish slaves, who, unfortunately, had been allowed so to multiply in our midst.

Ramesses the Great, in addition, did much to beautify our temples, and with the help of the gifted architect Beken-Khonsu, the First Prophet of Ammon, he added to the stupendous Temple of Karnac, built by Thothmes III and Seti I; and embellished the magnificent edifice of Luxor, constructed by Amenhotep III; Rameses also completed Ramessium⁶, and the Rock Temples of Abusimbel.⁶

At Abtu⁷ he built and dedicated a temple to the God Bes, this being well worthy to stand by the beautiful structure erected at that place by Seti I "To the glory of the Gods."

Foremost as Rameses the Great was among the

monarchs of his time, so also, if judged merely as a progenitor of his race, did he leave behind him an offspring far outnumbering the descendants of an ordinary man ; his family consisting of one hundred and eleven sons and fifty-nine daughters.⁸ Many of these, however, did not survive their father. The King's fourth and eldest surviving son Amen-hi-Khop-sanef,⁹ better known as Khamis, whose mother was Ast-nefert, the favourite wife of Pharaoh, conducted the Government for twenty-five years ; he was the founder of the Serapeum,¹⁰ and died, while acting as High Priest of Ptah, at Memphis.

Of Rameses's daughters, Bantanta¹⁰ was the favourite, she and some of the others, as is the custom in our Royal house, were also his wives.

At the great monarch's death, Menenptah,¹¹ a son of Ast-nefert, and the King's thirteenth and eldest surviving son, succeeded him.

In spite of all the efforts of the good Queen Nefertari, who now lies at peace in her tomb,¹² much rivalry and quarrelling took place among this numerous family ; in consequence of which, when Menenptah ascended the throne, it was by no means a peaceful position. Unfortunately, in selfishness alone, did he resemble his father ; otherwise, he proved to be dull, obstinate, and cruel, possessing none of the redeeming qualities of Rameses II, who, though by no means a good man, proved himself a great king.

During the first part of Menenptah's reign, little of importance happened beyond the continual conspiracies and rebellions occasioned by his near relatives, until war was declared with the Libyans, who were repulsed with great slaughter at the battle of Pa-ari-sheps,¹³ the King Maraja having to flee for his life.

In the meantime, Menenptah, terrified, shut himself up in the palace of the fortified City of Memphis, slaying with his own hand, any of the hapless messengers who arrived with bad news from the front.

This victory was chiefly due to the bravery of the veteran troops trained under Rameses the Great, who were most ably led by Seti, the Crown prince. Menenptah, the King, who remained at Memphis, however, took the entire credit of the campaign to himself, and had laudatory inscriptions to that effect placed in the Great Temple of Ammon at Karnac.¹⁴

Few and meagre are the buildings or public works carried out under this king, even the monument to his father's memory is but an insignificant temple dedicated to Ammon, yet though the body of the great Rameses¹⁵ rests but in the tombs of the rocky valley of Biban-el-molouk, yet his works throughout the land will always serve as grand and enduring monuments to his name.

Much of what I relate, is from personal recollections ; the rest, I learnt from those mentioned in these records, who told me not only their own experiences and what they were able to observe and hear at the time, but also a mass of information obtained from others, which has enabled me to build up a fairly accurate account of the events as they actually occurred.

CHAPTER I

PTAHMES COMMENCES HIS NARRATIVE— THE STORM

THE first scene of my story is at Thebes, the city, which to me appears the most imposing in all Egypt,—I should have said in the world, had I not heard such incredible descriptions of the great cities of Nineveh and Babylon. Thebes¹ is situated on the Nile, about 380 miles² from the sea, and 125 miles from Elephantine, and thus forms a capital centre for the commerce of Upper and Lower Egypt. For eight miles the great city extends along the Nile; and from both sides of the river, for the whole of this distance it stretches to the base of the mountain ranges, a distance of nine miles across.

The banks are bordered by handsome stone embankments, each side being planted with avenues of palm trees, which make these terraces favourite promenades for the inhabitants in the cool of the evenings.

These massive stone embankments are of great height and at the southern and northern ends, join the great walls of the City, thereby protecting each side of the Metropolis from inundation.

At Thebes, I was born, and have passed most of my lifetime, and for years have occupied the high position of "Third Prophet of Ammon," and Piromis, or Chief Priest of the temples of Thebes. In the neighbourhood

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dwell those whom I have known from childhood, and the whole of the surrounding district being so familiar, renders Thebes, to me, the most delightful place in the world. It is, therefore, not surprising that having just completed a tour, taken at the command of Pharaoh, to all the principal temples of Egypt, I so planned, that my journey should terminate at my native city, so that there I might rest while preparing my report for the Great King.

After my daily duties are over, I frequently seek the quiet repose afforded by the magnificent palace of Luxor, which, except on particular occasions, is not open to the public, but reserved for the special meetings and use of the priesthood. My favourite resting place is on the roof-terrace, for, from there, reclining in a canopy shaded by awnings, I can enjoy the slightest breeze and amuse myself by watching around me the wonderful panorama of the busy city. On the opposite side of the Nile stand the superb edifice of Ramessium³ and the magnificent temple of Qurneh [Kurna] and above all tower the two colossal seated statues⁴ of Amenophis III placed at the entrance of the Great Edifice "Amenophium," which he erected here.

Around the temples branch off avenues of private mansions inhabited by the nobles and richer citizens. Most of these are beautiful buildings surrounded by shady gardens, in which palm and other trees abound, and here also is the splendid Palace of Pharaoh, and a little further north the beautiful palace of Queen Hatshesowet.

In the more mercantile parts of the city may be seen the endless multitudes of people of different nationalities, caravans arriving from the interior, waggons loaded with freight from the vessels at the quays; smaller

ships and barges entering or leaving the numerous canals by the locks built at many places in the embankments, so that the freight may be shipped or delivered direct at wharves in various parts of the City, in fact, all the bustle occasioned by the business of a great trade centre; yet throughout, the greatest order is preserved, pilots and guards being stationed whenever necessary to organize the traffic. Thebes is also well protected by fortified walls of great height and strength and of a breadth sufficient to allow three two-horse war chariots to be driven easily abreast along the battlements, and there being a standing garrison of over twenty thousand two-horse chariots in case of emergency, and thousands of these chariots⁶ may be daily seen filled with well-equipped and carefully-drilled soldiers driving their wonderfully trained horses to and from the exercising grounds. On the eastern bank of the Nile, standing parallel and close to the embankment promenade, is situated the superb palace and temple of Luxor, dedicated to Ammon, behind which are the private gardens for the use of the priesthood; about a mile-and-a-quarter to the north, on the same side of the river, rise the magnificent Temples of Epet,^{5a} the buildings of which are a square mile-and-a-half in circumference; on this side of the Nile, also, are the two beautiful temples erected by Amenophis III⁶; the obelisks⁷ and the famous avenues of Sphinxes: The city stretches from the banks of the Nile to the base of the hills and is mostly occupied by the private houses of the wealthy, these, surrounded by terraces and gardens, form a pleasing view from the roof and balconies of Luxor, from whence the whole of the city and suburbs may be seen, which together extend for seven-and-twenty miles in circumference; the city

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alone, without counting the suburbs and the hippodrome, measuring over seventeen-and-a-half miles.⁸ The whole is surrounded by hills, which greatly shelter us from the desert winds.

At the north western side is the Valley of the Kings' tombs, which place seems to have been selected for a burial ground by our ancestors as if they wished to remind us, that in spite of all the great works which surround us, we are but mortal. This valley is entered by a rocky defile at the north, and runs to the south west, verging to the south, and contains the remains of some of the most celebrated of our race, as also, do the tombs at Gournon, which are situated on the eastern side of the same range.

It was during the rest I was taking at Thebes, after the above mentioned tour through Egypt, that one afternoon, while seated on the terrace roof of the palace of Luxor, amusing myself with watching the ever changing panorama of the city around me, that my attention was suddenly attracted by the extreme hurry and bustle of the ferrymen on the island opposite,⁹ evidently someone was determined to cross, the men seemed at first to demur, and then to make ready the ferry boat with the greatest possible haste; more I did not notice, for a strong gust from the south-west half lifted from their positions the awnings which sheltered me; turning round to that direction, I perceived a huge funnel-shaped cloud which tapered towards the earth, and was rapidly approaching from the south west; calling my attendants, I ordered them instantly to take all things below, for I foresaw, that in a very few minutes, we should be visited by some terrible hurricane, or cyclone.

Hardly had we gained shelter, than the tempest burst

over us ; hail and rain, accompanied by a darkness, as of night, enveloped the City ; even the vivid lightning showed us little : peal after peal of crashing thunder echoed through the mountains, deadening even the roar of the storm : at intervals, I could see by the flashes that the Nile had the appearance of a raging sea, the high crested waves being a mass of foam ; and then to my horror by the illumination of the lightning I saw the ferry boat tossing about in the midst of the surging waters ; it appeared stationary, as if the guiding ropes extending across the river had become entangled. I hoped, however, that my sight, obscured by the sand, hail and darkness, might be mistaken, for I knew no rope could long bear such a strain. Then almost as quickly as the raging blast had enveloped the City, even so, in the space of a few minutes was it gone, doubtless carrying destruction and death to many a poor soul in the desert. Then my thoughts reverted to the ferry boat ; to my dismay the hawsers on one side must have broken, and the other end become twisted up with the boat, for the frail bark was being swept down the river at an appalling rate, verging in a semi-circle towards the eastern embankment, against which, in a few seconds, it must be dashed with terrific force, and smashed to atoms, and the occupants launched into eternity : the distance was too great for us to be able to render the poor souls any assistance ; I could but murmur a prayer for their preservation, though such a chance seemed utterly hopeless

CHAPTER II

THE HEBREW

ALTHOUGH the havoc occasioned by the storm could be traced throughout Thebes, yet, so thirsty was the ground, that in a short time every drop of moisture had been absorbed, and the sky was again beautifully clear, when the glow of the setting sun began to bathe the city with its rosy reflections.

As the day waned, so the noise of the traffic increased, added to which were the shouts of the mule and camel drivers trying to bestir their beasts, so that they might arrive at their destinations before the sudden darkness of the east delayed their progress.

Lights began to shine in most of the buildings, for the shadows of the surrounding hills greatly curtail the daylight, though, on the other hand, the mountain range does so much to shelter the city from the distressing desert winds.

In front of one of the small retired houses in the suburbs, inhabited mostly by the middle class, a short, lean old Hebrew with a thin shaven face, and shifty eyes, stood anxiously looking along the road leading from the city.

His only daughter, Rachel, had during that afternoon gone across the river to visit some friends, and even taking into consideration that she would have to shelter during the storm, the girl should have returned nearly two hours ago.

The Israelite, whose name was Isaac, had during all this period been fidgetting backwards and forwards between the house and the garden gate. It was totally unlike Rachel to be late, therefore, to Isaac's anxious mind it seemed certain that she had been waylaid, or some accident must have happened, and he began, for the first time, to consider what he should do, if she were indeed maimed or dead. He was a widower, and she alone had in his old age supplied all those wants and little comforts, which a hired woman can rarely render. What little affection he was capable of, was concentrated on this girl, but even when her safety was doubtful, it was about himself, that his thoughts first disturbed him.

At last, he became so restless with worry, that he re-entered his dwelling, and after putting on a warmer robe and stouter sandals, called to the old woman, their only domestic, and cautioned her to well guard the house, while he went to make enquiries about his daughter.

To be in trouble was so unusual to the cold, selfish nature of Isaac, that it deranged his whole system, and the cool calculating brain seemed giddy and benumbed, as in frantic haste he went towards the City ferry, grumbling to himself that Rachel should cause him all this annoyance. So little notice did he take of those who passed, or of the traffic, that before he hardly realized it, he was rudely pushed aside and nearly knocked over by the runners¹ in front of a two-horsed chariot, the bright lights of which half dazed the old man, who, shaking and trembling, lifted himself up from against the wall which alone had prevented him from falling. Cursing the Egyptians as dogs, after picking up his stick, he hurriedly continued his journey,

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and without further mishap eventually arrived at the landing stage of the ferry, where he commenced his enquiries.

"Why, haven't you heard?" replied the boatman whom Isaac had addressed.

"Heard what?"

"Why, that the ferry chain broke during the storm, and that all the passengers were pitched into the river."

"And were any saved?—Was there a young girl dressed in dark blue amongst them?" anxiously enquired the old Hebrew.

"Oh, I don't know the details, it happened near the other side, the ropes getting fouled during the storm, the boat was dashed up against the embankment, and most of the passengers perished—at least so I hear; the temple boat came across a short time ago, bringing back, I believe, some of the rescued, but the men were so surly, through being ordered out late, that I couldn't gain much information."

"And have they returned?" asked Isaac.

"Nay," said the man, "there at yonder quay lies the boat!"

Hearing this, Isaac tottered down to the barge indicated, in which sat eight rowers and a helmsman, and he addressed his enquiries to the latter; but the man seemed disinclined to talk, but on being repeatedly questioned said:

"There have been a few rescued, whom the High Priest, in his goodness, had sent over in the Temple boat, as soon as they were well enough to return."

"And was there amongst them a young and beautiful girl dressed in dark blue?"

"No, I don't remember any dark blue costume," replied the man: "in fact, I know there wasn't, but I

daresay, if you go across in the morning, they can tell you. The ferryman, no doubt, will, by then, be well enough to give you some information."

Isaac leant forward from the steps and whispered a few words, but the helmsman shook his head.

"No, my good man," he said, "I daren't, else I would willingly; why, I should get bastinadoed to-morrow, if it were found out, and there are not a few, even among these fellows, who would be but too glad to get me into trouble. Nay, sir, you'll have to hire a boatman to take you across in the morning, or you won't be able to get there till mid-day, by which time a fresh ferry boat ought to be fixed. For myself, the sooner, the better I shall be pleased; seven times have I been obliged by the official orders to cross the river since the storm, and perhaps you would hardly believe it, sir, but by Osiris, not one of the passengers has had the decency to offer me a gratuity."

But Isaac did not take the hint; seeing that the man would not take him across, nor give him any further information, the old Hebrew clambered up the slippery steps of the embankment and approached another boatman:

"I suppose you won't mind crossing the river, if I give you a good fee?"

The man's reply was, however, sharp and prompt.

"Are you trying to get a poor man into trouble? You must know that none but the royal boats and those belonging to the priesthood or City officials, are allowed to pass after dark. Are you a stranger, or a devil who wishes to tempt a poor fellow to his death?"

Utterly dejected, Isaac found for once, that even with money, he was unable to gain his wish, the risk of detection being too great. Both at the north and the

south of the City, he knew the river between the City walls was carefully guarded by chains across the Nile, and river watchmen were so stationed, that there was no use in hiring a boatman higher up the Nile, and floating down the river and so achieving his purpose ; besides even if he could, it was impossible for him to leave the city before sunrise without an order. So seeing there was nothing he could do which would enable him to cross before morning, and still feeling anxious and miserable, he slowly trudged back to his dwelling.

CHAPTER III

PTAHMES CONTINUES HIS NARRATIVE

SHORTLY after the tempest had subsided, I received a message from my wife, High Priestess of Karnac, informing me that the Crown Prince had taken shelter in the Temple during the storm, and that she herself also wished to see me, at once, on an important subject ; knowing that the matter must be urgent, I hastened by the underground passage to the sanctuary.

I found the Prince, as usual, in the best of spirits. He assured me that visiting the Temple had, for once, brought him luck ; for he had been enabled to regard an almost faultless pearl, which had just been abstracted from the Nile.

'I trust, Sire, if it is without flaw, it may be allowed to remain so,' I gravely replied, for I knew instinctively that it was to some young maiden he alluded.

"Ah, Ptahmes, could I but acquire some of your calmness of spirit, I should perhaps be able to view female loveliness unmoved, but nature has determined otherwise. To me, Art and Love are ail that render life worth the living. If, instead of having to occupy myself about state affairs, I could but change my position with one of the nobles of our court, I might be able then to amuse myself to my fancy ! "

Being curious to see who had thus occasioned the Prince's admiration, I, on the first occasion possible,

withdrew under the excuse that I must look after the welfare and wants of the rescued. Alas ! of these I found but four men and three women, out of six and twenty souls.

I must confess the girl who had attracted the Crown Prince's fancy, was of most extraordinary beauty ; nature had indeed been lavish with her charms. A fine majestic, though rather too voluptuous figure ; luxuriant brown hair, and a noble face, that is to say, most people would have considered it so, but to me, there was one disfigurement, which obliterated all other merits. She was, undoubtedly, an Israelite, a nation which I abominate, and towards whom I feel a repulsion and loathing, for which I cannot account.

I then hurriedly visited the other sufferers, and found that all would be well enough to be sent home within a few hours, except the ferryman, who had had a leg broken, which one of the priests¹ was setting. My wife, I knew, was all this time awaiting me. When I entered our private apartments, she at once opened a cabinet, and taking from it a magnificent old necklace said :

" Do you recognize this ? "

Taking up the valuable trinket, I examined it carefully and opened the pendant :

" Yes, there is no longer any doubt, it is one and the same, and you ? " I asked.

" The proof is that I sent for you, as soon as I discovered it on the neck of the rescued girl. I took it off before she recovered consciousness. Almost her first action on regaining her senses, was to clutch at her neck, and finding the necklace gone, immediately enquired after it, before even asking where she was, or how she had been saved. Luckily, I had managed to

take it without being observed, therefore, no one knows except ourselves that it is here."

By the simple hazard of this accident, a most appalling discovery was brought to light, for this necklace was a favourite piece of jewellery formerly owned by Queen Ast-nefert, who always regarded it as a talisman, and, by her special desire, it had been buried with her. I had been the one who, according to her wish, had placed the precious string of gems around her neck, before she had been enveloped in her burial clothes. How came it then that this necklace was now in our hands?—It could not have been taken from her body at the time of burial, for I had remained at prayer in the chamber till the sarcophagus was closed. I had myself conducted the funeral service, and then had seen the royal body carried to its final resting-place in "The Valley of Tombs," and had remained there till after the sepulchre had been permanently walled in. There was only one possible solution to the mystery; the tomb must have since been opened, and the royal corpse rifled. And if this tomb had been desecrated, how many more of the royal vaults might not have been treated in like manner?

My wife and I, however, decided that we were more likely to come to a solution by guarding the utmost secrecy concerning the whole matter. No allusion was to be made to the girl concerning it, and if she referred again to the loss of the necklace, the affair was to be treated as if of little importance.

I, however, determined to have the girl carefully watched, and a daily report sent to me of all her associates, and their doings. For this purpose I at once communicated with the keeper of the chariots at the other side of the river, and instructed him to meet the Temple boat, and to drive those of the rescued, who

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would be returning to that side of the river, to their abodes ; and if I found she dwelt this side, I should adopt the same course. Thus I should gain knowledge of her dwelling, though apparently doing only a kindly action.

On leaving our private apartments I returned to the royal party, and found the Prince and his suite in animated conversation with the rescued girl. Perceiving me enter, Prince Seti² joined me, and commenced to talk of the accident, and enquire after the others who had been saved. Then, as if casually, he told me it was not necessary to mention his rank to the girl, from which I at once concluded, that he had, unfortunately, become enamoured with her, and intended, without a doubt, to use her as a fresh plaything.

It appeared that he had himself, with the aid of his nobles and attendants, been largely instrumental in saving the lives of the rescued.

If only Prince Seti could be induced to pay as much attention to religion, as he does to the fair sex, how great a blessing it would be for the priesthood!

I accompanied him to the royal barge, and talked over with him the object of my proposed journey to Tanis, which was to lay before Pharaoh the opinions of the Governors and High Priests of Egypt, concerning the Israelitish question ; and asked him what effect he thought my report might have on the future action of his royal father towards the Hebrews ; and I showed him the urgency of decisive measures, and the possible appeal for help which might be made to him, as Crown Prince, by the priesthood, should Pharaoh continue obstinately to refuse to listen to the counsel of his ministers.

He answered me very graciously, and promised to talk to me further about the matter before he left the City.

CHAPTER IV

THE PRINCE'S MESSENGER

SETI knew that it would be unwise if he, the Crown Prince, should visit at the house of an Israelite ; in fact, to take any further notice of this Hebrew girl was pure folly, consequently he felt annoyed, that he, who had been so courted and sought after by the highest and most beautiful women in the land, should still allow his senses to be so influenced by the uncommon beauty of this girl.

" 'Tis a mere passing fancy," he said to himself, yet it was perhaps the knowledge that his passion would be surrounded by difficulties, that added a zest to the undertaking, and made the prospect of such a love intrigue still more tempting, and he determined at least to send and make enquiries concerning her.

After the hour of siesta, on the day succeeding the ferry fatality, a stranger, who judging from his manner and dress belonged to the higher Egyptian society, entered the tidily kept garden of Isaac the Hebrew. The visitor, who was above the ordinary height, appeared in the prime of life, his athletic figure, well-cut features, and open genial expression, gave him a prepossessing appearance, at least so thought old Hagar, the domestic, as she opened the door to his summons, and answered his enquiries respecting the health of her young mistress ; he, moreover, informed the old woman that he called

by the express orders of the Crown Prince, who had heard of the accident, and perhaps under such circumstances, the young lady might receive him personally, so that he could the better inform his royal patron. It so happened that Rachel was singing to her own accompaniment on the harp, and did not know of the visitor's presence till Hagar came with his message, he was, thereupon, shewn into the sitting room, and she instantly recognized him as one of the gentlemen who had been so attentive to her in the temple of Karnac.

"My father is, unfortunately, absent," she said, "but I pray you accept our united thanks for the considerate enquiries of the Prince, and his goodness in taking an interest in so lowly a maiden; although still weak and faint, my chief feeling is one of thankfulness for my preservation; and I pray that all the other sufferers are making as satisfactory progress." But she found that her visitor had little knowledge of the other cases.—"Though the Prince has undoubtedly made enquiries through the proper channels," he added. Then he commenced to talk of music and singing in which she was so accomplished, then judging that the care shown in the little garden was probably the result of her handiwork, he admired the beauty of her flowers, remarking how much pleasure could be derived through tending to them, and thus leading her on to talk of their cultivation, divining rightly that it was one of her favourite occupations. Thus conversing on a theme she loved, the girl lost all restraint, and asking him to walk round the garden, she was shortly talking to him, as if with an old acquaintance.

"You must allow me to call again," said the visitor on taking his leave, "that I may have the pleasure of meeting your father, it is such a treat to come to a

simple homely house, and be free from all the formalities of the Court, in fact to us, who are so restricted as to what we do or say, it makes a perfect holiday."

And having gained this permission, the Prince's envoy left her.

When old Isaac returned, he was delighted to hear of the visit. "But," he added, "I feel vexed that I was not here, in order to have met the Prince's messenger."

"Messenger!" echoed Rachel. "He was no ordinary messenger, his manner was so simple and his bearing so courtly, that he appeared to me to be some noble; if he is by rank but a simple gentleman, yet, for all that, he is of the highest nobility, being one of nature's gentlemen, who are far above any earthly rank."

Isaac looked at the girl in mute astonishment, and then absolutely chuckled.

"Pshaw!" he muttered, "Are you so simple, as to be impressed by a mere trick of his trade,—the manners acquired at court, which impress the common herd? I dare wager the fellow has not a gold piece to call his own, in spite of his charming manners, I suppose he felt it a condescension even to call and make enquiries!—How I hate the whole race!"

"Father, how can you speak thus? Do you forget that this was one of the gentlemen who helped to save me, and that all that has been done is out of pure good-heartedness, and not for the sake of gain?"

"Well, well, perhaps I am wrong to be heated. When did you say he was coming to call again?—The day after to-morrow?"

"Yes, father, he said he would like to make your acquaintance."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Isaac. "He wants to make my acquaintance, does he? Most likely wants me to

lend him money. No Court gallant would want to make Isaac's acquaintance, if it were not to gain something.—Why should he ? ”

Nevertheless, Isaac rubbed his hands together, as was his habit, when pleased, while he thought the matter over. Among no class did he wish more to acquire a footing, than with the extravagant, gilded youth of the Court. What chances of gain might not thus be opened out ? And as he considered all these possibilities, the intervening time seemed interminable. At last the wished-for day arrived, a day which to Isaac might mean so much, if he could only gain a man of this stamp as his agent who was probably, in fact nearly certain to be, in need of cash, like the rest of them, and what more substantial way of shewing his gratitude than by putting this courtly jay in a position which would enable him to earn handsome gratuities for services rendered, and thus saving his pride from being wounded by the offer of money ? In fact, in the airy castle he was building, it was Isaac who was the benefactor all round, for rarely, if ever, does a rascal consider himself a rascal.

The mid-day siesta had long passed, and Isaac had been peering over the gateway for the last hour, feeling nervous with anxiety lest the expectant visitor should fail to come, when at last, however, the Hebrew caught sight of a well-dressed stranger approaching his dwelling, he with the shifty way of his race, quickly retired indoors, and commenced looking over some papyri as if he had quite forgotten the promised visit of the Prince's envoy.

Shortly afterwards, to Isaac's great joy, he heard a stranger's footstep in the garden, and as he rose to meet him, he put on the Hebrew mask of humility :

"Ah, my lord, what do I not owe you? Life itself would not repay my debt, for my daughter's life is to me of far more value than my own. To whom, I pray you, am I so much beholden?"

"Sir," replied the Egyptian, "what I did was but a natural service to render, and if I was fortunate enough with the aid of others, to rescue your daughter, I pray you consider I am more than repaid by the pleasure it has given me to have been of some use to so fair a maiden. Had I, in the same manner, needed your assistance, you would not, I feel sure, have been backward in rendering it."

"Certainly not, my lord, certainly not."

A faint smile played on the Egyptian's face as he inwardly prayed that he might never have to depend on so doubtful an aid.

"And what, my lord, may I call my noble-minded benefactor? So that I may treasure his name in the inner recesses of my heart."

"My name, sir, is of little moment, but as you ask it, call me Horus."

"Ah, Lord Horus, I dare wager, though your lordship does not say so."

"Nay, simple Horus let it be, a title is but a useless adjunct, and to my mind of little value."

"I have been puzzling my brains, my lord,—I beg your pardon,—noble sir,—how I might be enabled in some way to acknowledge this great obligation. Even if I could not be of use to yourself, might I not be of some service to your young friends? Young gallants at court often have great expenses, so much so, that I believe even they, at times, are short of cash."

"Now, though poor myself, I have friends—men who wish to put out money to good advantage, and who

would be only too willing, in such cases, to aid anyone whom I may recommend. Thus poor Isaac might be able, indirectly, to assist the friends of his benefactor ; and believe me, sir, my friends would not forget to remunerate well anyone who would introduce business—that is, providing it was profitable business. It could be made well worth your while," added Isaac, poking Horus in the ribs, while he chuckled : " and many a gold piece would go rolling into those pockets of yours."

Horus, however, had begun to regard Isaac with such a stony stare, that it made the old man feel uncomfortable, and he commenced nervously to rub his hands together. Evidently the stranger was going to make some stern remark, when the pretty Rachel appeared at the doorway, saying :—

"I pray you, sir, forget not to visit my flowers, some of which are already beginning to close their eyes for the night, and I would fain have you see them in their full glory."

"And forget not, fair sir, to think over my proposition," said Isaac, "and fail not to let me know speedily."

But the Egyptian had already followed the girl, where, admiring the botanical gems Rachel had been able to collect, and enjoying the fragrant scents of the roses and lilies, he tried to forget the wily old Hebrew's sordid propositions.

It was quite dusk ere Horus left the garden, for not only was he deeply interested in floral culture,—and Rachel had, through traders, managed to collect some very rare and unique plants,—but his admiration for the girl herself was rapidly growing upon him, for he began to realize that she possessed a steadfast and

loyal nature of even far more rarity than the wonderful beauty of her face and figure.

Both Horus and Rachel were pleased when it was arranged that another visit should be paid—as soon as his duties permitted.

CHAPTER V

A LATE VISIT

ALTHOUGH Isaac had no further opportunity of explaining to Horus the great advantages he was offering him, yet the old Hebrew had no doubt that the Egyptian, on thinking over his proposition, would readily grasp at the opportunity of so easily augmenting his income, and he felt confident that he would soon receive further news of him.

As the evening drew on, old Isaac sat in his chamber gloating over the prospects which might thus be opened to him. It was nearly certain that before another month was over, at least twenty of the nobles attending the court would be in his debt, paying not less than sixty to a hundred per cent., without counting the fines. What a pity it seemed that he could not also sell them some of Ismael's antique jewellery ! But the risk would perhaps be too great. Yet if he could be sure that the setting was no later than the twelfth dynasty what wealth might he not acquire !

He was thus ruminating, when a sudden tap at the window made him start. He listened—again the same sound ; this time he heard two distinct double raps.

" Ah ! it's Ismael, I expect," muttered the old man, " how the beast startled me. What can he want again so soon ? "

Cautiously opening the window, and being apparently

satisfied, he told his visitor to go round to the back, and hastened to open the door.

A tall powerful man of Hebrew type entered.

"Well, what do you want?" asked Isaac in a querulous voice, as soon as he had closed the door.

"Money," replied the man.

"Money! It's always money. You must think I'm made of money. Only last week I gave you fifty more shekels¹—just think! And now you come for more, and if I am not able to sell the necklace, what then?"

"Well, give it back to me," said the man, "if you can't sell it."

"Return the money you have had on it, and the interest, and it is yours. What makes you want more money?"

"Because I must purchase a new barge and leave Thebes," the man replied.

"Leave Thebes!" said Isaac, "are you mad? You surely would not leave your gold mines?"

"Better lose gold mines than my life. I tell you, Isaac, during the last two days and nights, the entire mountain range has been watched; dogs are even being employed to try and track us. My brother and I have therefore determined to leave the work for a time, until all is quiet again; so I must have money and at once."

Isaac did not reply for a minute or two, then he said:

"If you have really decided to go, and wish for money, why not sell me the secret of the entrance, and let me work the tombs myself?"

"You!" replied Ismael. "In the first place you aren't capable of doing any work yourself, and secondly, even if you were it is no longer safe. Do you think we

should leave such profitable work unless we were obliged?"

"Well, never mind that; if I care to take the risk, are you willing to sell the secret?"

For more than an hour the Hebrews wrangled together; Isaac offering a hundred shekels, then two hundred. But Ismael demanded more, and the old man had finally to pay five hundred shekels to clinch the bargain; half of which Ismael demanded down, and the rest was to be paid on the night he was shown the entrance to the tombs. Ismael also stipulated that Isaac was to have no right to any of the treasures they might collect on or before that visit.

This bargain being concluded, Ismael persisted in redeeming his jewellery; Isaac was just as determined not to part with it, making the excuse that it had been sent to a securer place for safety. At last words were nearly coming to blows, till Isaac offered to buy the trinket for he knew its value must be enormous, though he had hoped if Ismael were really leaving Thebes, that he might be able, by some excuse, to retain the jewellery and give Ismael but a small proportion of the sale money.

Again they bargained and disputed, till Ismael agreed to leave the necklace with Isaac if he would give him another fifty shekels on account.

"That makes a hundred shekels you have had on account for an old necklace!" grumbled Isaac. "I shall never see the money again—never!"

"And the rest?" asked Ismael.

"Well, shall we say another hundred when I have sold it?—but I fear I shall lose by the bargain."

However Isaac was inwardly sufficiently contented, and he arranged with Ismael that he should visit the tombs as soon as possible.

"I was positive," continued old Isaac, "that I was followed yesterday. I, therefore, went into Joshua's house, but the man passed apparently unconcerned; I, however, took the precaution to leave by the back entrance. Yet, before I had gone far, I noticed that a woman seemed to be dodging after me, and passing through exactly the same streets as myself, and she never left me till I reached home. Rachel says it may have been only a coincidence, for we can see no-one watching the house."

"Ah!" said Ismael, "you don't think they are idiots enough to station anyone in the street, and suppose you won't find it out, like some fools I've heard of. If you are watched, it is from some house from which they can see you, without being seen. But I do not understand why you should be suspected, unless you have mentioned the necklace to anyone."

"Not to a soul, and no-one would guess that it was under this floor in an iron box."

Ismael smiled, for Isaac a short time before had implied that he had sent it elsewhere for safety.

"You see, my dear friend," added Isaac, "I could have helped you greatly in this matter by my knowledge of the work of the different periods. Not only is the more ancient jewellery safer to deal with, from the fact that it cannot be recognized, but it is of far finer workmanship than the modern. You can see what I mean better by examining the necklace, for though it is very ancient, yet it has modern fastenings," and Isaac, by touching a spring in the wainscot, freed a floor board, from under which he lifted a small iron box. Barely had the old man opened the lid, than he commenced to clutch and frantically throw about the wool with which the interior was filled, then he cried out:—

" Why, it's gone ! I've been robbed ! robbed of the most precious necklace in the world !—I'm ruined ! "

" What is it, man ? " asked Ismael.

" Why, the necklace you brought me, it's gone !—a fortune in itself ! "

" How a fortune ? Why, you grudged me two hundred shekels for it just now. If I thought you were trying to cheat me, I'd wring your skinny old neck, but you'll have to pay for it, lost or not lost."

" How dare you ? " cried the old man. " It must be you who have done this, for you were the only one who knew that I had it. Give me back my money, give it back to me—you blackguard ! "

Thoroughly exhausted by his fury the old man staggered back and fell on the floor.

Rachel and the old servant hearing the noise came rushing into the room.

" What is it ? What have you done to him ? " asked the girl angrily.

" I ? Nothing, he says someone has stolen a necklace."

" Yes, I'm robbed, ruined ! " moaned Isaac, " curses on them ! Get away ! " he said, drawing himself away from Ismael who offered to help him up. " Lift me up, you two," he said turning to his daughter and Hagar, " and tell that dog to be gone ! "

Then suddenly the old man bethought himself, and as he regained his feet said :

" Nay, Ismael, take no heed of what I say, I am bereft of understanding by this blow. If this is gone, other things may go, and I'm no longer safe—nothing is ! "

" But surely the matter can be explained ? " said Ismael, " things can't go without hands. Have you had anyone here—any stranger about the place ? "

"Ah!" cried Isaac, "that's it, it must be that villain Horus! I understand now why he came while I was out."

In the meantime, Rachel, white with anxiety, spoke quietly to Ismael and asked him to go. The man saw nothing further was to be gained by remaining, so turning to Isaac said:—

"We shall expect you any time during the next few days."

"Yes, I shall be better by then, I hope," replied old Isaac, "I will come as soon as it is safe. Remember I am but a poor old man, Ismael, and this shock has stunned me; to-morrow I shall be myself again. Expect me in a day or two and have all prepared. Don't go from here by the front, the house may be watched. Ah! that is why they dodged about and followed me; it has been discovered that the necklace was in my possession, and as they have secured one they now hope to get others. Ha, ha, ha! not if I know it,—Isaac can take his precautions. Show him round by the back, Rachel, and let him pass out by Esau's yard."

Ismael made no further remark, but following the girl, left the house

CHAPTER VI

ISAAC AND HIS PLANS

A WEEK passed by, a second, and then a third, and yet Isaac received no message from the Prince's envoy. Had he not made the offer sufficiently definite? For surely no one in a lower capacity—probably some kind of under-secretary—would refuse to take advantage of such benefits as Isaac had offered. Restless with anxiety, for to him it meant so much, he at last set out to the city and visited the large refreshment gardens adjacent to the palace. Here he made enquiries, but although he was fortunate enough to get into conversation with some of the palace servants, yet he was unable to gain the least information; in fact all tended to prove that there was no such person existing among the Court officials, and most likely this pretended gentleman was simply some obscure trader from another city, who, being present at the time of the accident and wishing to amuse himself by making Rachel's acquaintance, thought he might the more easily gain his end, by saying he was connected with the Court. Yet, what puzzled Isaac was, that his daughter was positive that their visitor was one of the royal party, and she had, moreover, observed that he was treated by everyone with the most marked respect; also, Rachel had been conveyed home in one of the royal chariots, by which it appeared that the Prince

had taken some interest in the matter—though again, this might have been through the priests obtaining permission to use the conveyance, which was simply waiting for the Court officials on the evening of the accident.

Disappointed and vexed, Isaac, as a last resource, even visited the chief caravanserais to see if he could obtain any information of the stranger, but without effect. Worn out, he returned home and talked the matter over with Rachel, and at last prevailed upon her to help in the quest.

Every day for over a week, the girl crossed the river and passed her time on the embankment, or in the courts of the temple, in hopes of meeting some one of the gentlemen or officials who had spoken to her on the day of the catastrophe. She questioned the temple attendants, but no one had heard of such a personage, they remembered that some of the royal party had been visiting the temple at the time of the accident, and leave had been obtained to make use of one of the Prince's chariots for the conveying of the rescued to their homes—exactly as Isaac had conjectured—beyond this the attendants knew nothing, and she was unable to gain any further information, except that one scribe informed her that the Prince had been at Nekheb,¹ and it was believed would now remain at Thebes for a short time ; he added, that the Prince would probably have scores of gentlemen in his train, who might be totally unknown to the officials of the Palace or Temples. No one could tell her concerning the movements of the Court, which were always kept private. Isaac, on hearing this, felt it useless to rely further on this source for gain, and he considered that it became urgent to push on his transactions with Ismael, for the old Hebrew

was never satisfied unless he was money-making, this being the chief passion of his life.

For many nights he visited the fisherman's dwelling ; but, owing to the suspicious appearance of goat-herds passing day and night on the mountains, it was considered unsafe to hazard an expedition, and Isaac was only too fully aware of the danger : for to be discovered in connection with such transactions would mean torture, if not death.

In order to avoid observation, he returned in the early morning from these fruitless journeys, disguised as a helper on Ismael's boat, to the fish-market.

After a little time the watch on the mountains seemed to be abandoned ; and not having observed any of the goat-herds, or other suspicious persons, prowling about the mountains after dusk for over a week, it was decided, one dark and stormy night, to make an attempt to visit the tombs.

CHAPTER VII

A PERILOUS EXPEDITION¹

BEFORE starting, however, Ismael insisted that Isaac should pay the balance of the five hundred shekels as arranged.

This having been received, Ismael and his wife Leah, accompanied by his brother Joseph, who was also a powerfully built man, and Ismael's son Benjamin, a lad of about sixteen, got ready to start ; Leah carrying empty sacks ; the others, ropes, lamps, and all requisite implements ;—Isaac alone being left unburdened.

A raging wind with a heavy drenching rain accompanied by thunder and lightning made the night none too pleasant, and to follow even a rough, uneven path, on such a pitch dark and rainy night, would be no easy task, but to scale the rocky sides of a mountain, when one's limbs are weak and feeble, and to be told that a false step would probably mean instant death, was a torture which Isaac had not bargained for, and he began to curse the hour he had arranged to come. Even the two active men seemed to find it no light work, for the sacks of ropes and implements they were obliged to carry, were exceedingly cumbersome ; the woman, a tall, muscular female, and the boy scrambled up behind Isaac, who kept missing his steps and floundering against the rocks.

At last, after over an hour of terrible exertion, the

old man having been pulled up half the way, found himself on the summit, his legs and shins cut and bruised, and his clothes wet through, for the tempest had raged during the whole time, and had greatly added to his discomfort. Here the party halted, and Isaac was told to rest while the ropes were being made ready for the descent ; this being finished, Ismael let himself down a rocky cliff and on his signal the rope was hauled up, and Isaac, securely tied, was lowered by Joseph and his sister-in-law. Implements, lanterns, sacks, etc., were next let down, then Joseph followed, the woman and boy remaining behind to keep watch.

To Isaac, the sensation of dangling and twirling round in space, at the end of a rope, and being knocked against the out-jutting rocks, had been by no means pleasant, and when Ismael had finished untying him and he could look around, he found that he was on a kind of ledge only a few feet in breadth ; by the vivid lightning he saw a deep precipice on one side of him, and the sheer bare face of the rocky cliff on the other. Along this narrow ridge the party now proceeded for about forty yards, it then widened to about fifty feet, most of which space was encumbered with huge boulders some of which were from ten to twenty feet in height. Around one of these Ismael and Joseph fastened ropes, and by means of using iron bars as levers, little by little they managed to move the heavy rock aside, beneath which was disclosed the entrance to a pit large enough to admit a man's body ; across this they placed a heavy iron bar, to which a rope was quickly and securely fixed, by this Ismael descended to the bottom and then lit a lantern. The rope being pulled up, Joseph lowered Isaac, who, in the descent, again received many a cut and blow from the sharp outsticking rocks ; large bats

also whirled by him, and the old man at last gave an appalling shriek as one of these creatures settled on his face ; at the same time Joseph dropped him into space. Had it not been for the empty sacks thrown at the bottom of the pit, his legs would probably have been broken. Shaken and dazed, overwhelmed by curses from Ismael for calling out, Isaac, after being relieved of the rope, lay for several minutes in a panting condition near the place where he had fallen.

In the meantime, Joseph had quickly descended, and lighting another lantern, told the old man to get up quickly and follow them.

Isaac observed that the chamber into which the party had descended was large and lofty ; the walls were adorned by painting of surprising beauty and finish, and the flooring coated with a glazed cement. Four large sarcophagi were in the centre of this vault which, except for the heaps of mummy clothes and papyri thrown carelessly about, shewed no signs that the tombs had been desecrated ; the whole apartment, however, was pregnant with a strong aromatic smell, evidently emitted from the corpses.

Isaac was not left long to his contemplations, but told to get through a hole which had been roughly hewn in the wall at the end of the chamber. This passage, which was only just large enough for a man to crawl through, communicated with a large hall, containing several sarcophagi, and these, judging from the smell and debris lying around, had also been pillaged. The men passed from chamber to chamber, some being connected by proper portals, others had to be reached by roughly made tunnels—some sloping upwards, others downwards ; many of the walls showing that in several cases, passage after passage had been made

without result, before communication with another suite of tombs could be found. Thus many of the beautifully inlaid designs on the walls, some richly ornamented with gold, had been ruthlessly destroyed. The ornaments and furniture,² most prized by the deceased personages and considered sacred, had been thrown aside, and even the vases³ containing the viscera of the mummies had not been respected.

Isaac called Ismael's attention to the fact that in some of the chambers through which they passed, the sarcophagi looked undisturbed, there being no litter about, but the man assured him with a cunning self-satisfied smile, that they had all received a fair amount of attention, and that the richest jewels were contained in the tombs to which they were going.

At last, they reached a large squarely built hall, in the centre of which, on a marble dais, stood an immense sarcophagus made apparently of some transparent stone like alabaster. This chamber was very lofty, and was surrounded by a lower roofed passage or corridor, in which rested several sarcophagi. Between this corridor and the central apartment was a colonnade of huge highly gilded statues, most likely representing the ancestors of the deceased. Isaac noticed that the sarcophagus in the centre of the chamber had been opened on some previous occasion, for the huge lid had been thrown carelessly on the floor.

Ismael and his brother here commenced their work, and did not lose much time before they hoisted the coffin from its case, and wrenched off its lid. They then ruthlessly commenced to strip the dead ; the body was thrown on the ground and the wrappers round the throat and chest cut through. The arms and legs were treated in the same manner ; necklaces, armlets,

bracelets, earrings, and any other ornaments were quickly taken off and recklessly thrown into a sack. Once Isaac tried to finger them, but being sharply reprimanded by Ismael, he contented himself with copying the names and ages of these illustrious dead.

Not the slightest feeling of remorse or horror seemed to discomfort the old man, and as to his companions, the continuance of this work for years had entirely dulled any finer feelings they might have formerly possessed.

Isaac, who stood watching them, actually rubbed his hands and chuckled :

" What riches ! it is wonderful !—incredible ! And how long is it since you commenced to carry on this trade ? "

" For twenty years, my friend, we have been occupied with this work, but mostly at the tombs on the plain ; it has only been during the last few years we have been able to effect an entrance here. But this is no time to talk ! " and the two men continued their work of cutting through the mummy wrappings and collecting the jewellery.

The respective position of Isaac and the men seemed altered since he had joined them. In the City the old Hebrew was the most important, but here he seemed to sink into a shadow, simply doing as he was ordered. Both Ismael and Joseph considered that the old man was only there on sufferance, in return for the five hundred shekels ; but having entered into the contract they intended carrying it out ; although, they had since found out how Isaac had tried to deceive them, as to the real value of the necklace of priceless gems ; and both brothers, perhaps unwittingly, began to show their contempt for their old compatriot, as they commenced

to realize how wealthy they might become, if they could reach some places where they might be able to dispose of their plunder at its true market value ; therefore, Isaac had ceased to be the use they had formerly anticipated. But the old Hebrew did not realize this, and was gloating over the treasures which he hoped would so shortly be his.

" Yes, yes ! we shall do much business together. As I formerly called it, this is a regular gold mine ! good ! good !" he muttered as he again rubbed his skinny hands together.

The other two men, however, spoke but little, working as if their life depended on the quickness of their operations ; corpse after corpse was rapidly but thoroughly searched, and then hastily tossed back into its sarcophagus. Sometimes it was placed in its mummy case, other times the coffin was thrown in on the top. As to the original position of the arms, so rigorously regarded among the Egyptian dead, or any other respect being given to the illustrious bodies, it was unthought of by these men ; to them the mummies were merely old rubbish, which yielded them more or less return for their labour, but whether the mummy happened to be that of a king, queen, priest or some nobly born personage, was to them a matter of utter indifference.

Suddenly both men stopped their work and listened, their quick sense of hearing intensified by the danger they always ran, had caught the sound of footsteps approaching, and a few seconds after, Ismael's son, carrying a lantern, crawled through the hole from the next chamber ; gasping for breath from his haste, he said :—

" We must have been watched and followed, for Mother and I have distinctly heard the barking of a dog

at least half way up the mountain. We must, therefore, escape quickly, or we shall be taken."

Old Isaac turned ghastly pale as he heard these words, that he, the influential Israelite, the richest and most respected of his nation in Thebes, should be caught helping to pillage the royal tombs was terrible ! Little time, however, was left him for further thought, everything was rapidly collected and thrown into sacks, and Isaac hurriedly pushed through the connecting tunnels, which in some cases were several feet from the ground ; he was then roughly hustled and dragged across the chambers and continually sworn at for his slowness.

As soon as Joseph reached the chamber by which they had entered, he ascended to the surface. In the meantime Isaac was roughly tied with the rope and hauled up by Joseph, no care being taken to allow the old man time to avoid the violent blows he received from the projecting rocks. Arriving at the mouth of the pit, the rope was almost torn from him, and the end at once thrown down the pit ; the implements, sacks, etc., were then quickly drawn up, and Ismael and the boy rapidly followed to the surface. Isaac was next hurried along the rocky ledge to the spot where they had descended. Benjamin here mounted the rope, and he and Leah pulled up old Isaac, who was ordered to return at once with Benjamin to the hut. In vain the old man protested that he would help, and could easily carry one of the sacks of jewels ; he was only rudely sworn at, and told he had better follow Benjamin as cautiously as he could to the hut, if he valued his life ; the lad being strictly ordered to see that their pursuers were well on their windward during their return.

CHAPTER VIII

PTAHMES CONTINUES HIS NARRATIVE THE SEARCH PARTY

THE amazing discovery that the royal tombs had been pillaged was a matter which required most careful and secret enquiry. The entrance to the valley had always been kept well guarded and Pasera, prince of the Necropolis and Panbui,¹ his chief, affirmed that a thorough examination at the portals of the tombs showed that these had neither been opened nor disturbed. It was evident, therefore, that an entry must have been effected by sinking a shaft and tunnelling, which, from the rocky character of the hills, must have been a long and most laborious work.

Having proof that the tomb of Queen Ast-nefert had been entered, I commenced my investigations on that side of the valley. Reliable men disguised as goat-herds were scattered about the mountains, and a continual watch was kept.

All persons visiting the dwelling of Isaac, the Hebrew girl's father, were also carefully observed, and this disclosed the fact that many who entered the house in the front must have left it at the back, for they might be seen sometimes to go in twice or thrice a day, and they were not noticed to leave. As there was no street at the back of the garden, I presumed that there must be a passage connecting Isaac's dwelling with some other

house, therefore, as I wished to carry out this investigation thoroughly, it became necessary to have all the surrounding roads watched, and thus I was soon acquainted with all their ways of entry and egress. The very fact of these precautions being adopted aroused my suspicions, and made me feel that all this secrecy would not be resorted to without some very particular reason.

Isaac also acted in a curious manner ; several times he was seen to enter the houses of compatriots, which he was not observed to leave till several hours after. In the meantime he had gone out by some other exit, and had been seen in various parts of the City. On other occasions when watched, he simply strolled about the hills and suburbs, yet he was never observed to hold converse with suspected characters, nor to do anything to lead us to connect him with these robberies ; or to prove that he could be a receiver of stolen goods. His daughter and an old woman domestic were the only occupants of his dwelling, and from them no information could be obtained.

Our men on the hills could find no pits, neither had any suspicious loiterers been observed in the neighbourhood, though watch had been kept day and night, and dogs employed : I even sent my own hound, which has been specially trained for tracking criminals, but all to no purpose. I therefore concluded, that these sacrileges must have been carried out years ago, and the place of entry had probably been filled in and would now most likely be completely overgrown with vegetation, and I should have given up the search had not certain mysterious disappearances of Isaac attracted my curiosity. He was observed to leave the City at dusk, but was never seen to re-enter the gates during the same evening ;

yet, on the following morning, was to be found at his dwelling, without my being able to discover how he had returned. It was at this crisis, that I heard of a famous eastern hound, whose instinct for tracking had been most marvellously developed, and having been fortunate enough to arrange with the owner to accompany our search party with this dog, I determined to superintend the expedition myself.

I had a theory that the sacrileges had been carried out at night, and that the thieves did not live within the City precincts, for fear that their constant going to and fro might attract the attention of the guards at the gates. Their approach to the tombs, therefore would be from the other side of the hills, or from the Nile, and I thought the latter the more probable.

For three successive nights I had the dog led quietly to Isaac's dwelling, but during the first two trials the animal lost the trail soon after leaving the house. On the third night, however, someone must have recently quitted the dwelling, for he led us direct by the northern gate to some fishermen's huts on the river bank, about a mile from the city. After a great sniffing at one of these dwellings, the animal, with that wonderful canine instinct, which we poor mortals are unable to comprehend, started off inland, as if clearly to tell us that the quarry had left the hut. The dog continued to lead us in the direction of the range, his master and I, accompanied by six stalwart men, following as best we could. So unaccustomed am I to mountain climbing that I found the steep rocky sides of the boulders made the ascent dreadfully fatiguing ; added to this it was a terribly rough night, the rain and wind scarcely allowing the lamp to keep alight ; moreover, my foothold frequently gave way beneath me and threw me heavily on to the

rocks, so that when I reached the summit, my feet and legs were bruised and bleeding, and even the younger members of our party were thankful when the toil was over.

The hound had, during the whole time, kept steadily on, following a kind of rough track ; although the rocks were in some places beyond its reach, and it was only able to mount them by the aid of his master.

Arriving at the summit overlooking the valley, the dog stopped at the edge of the steep cliff, which here descends abruptly for at least fifty feet. At this place recent footsteps were distinctly visible, but at first it seemed hopeless to try and lower the animal here. But the dog so clearly showed us that it wished to continue the trail, that after great difficulty we succeeded ; leaving one to guard our rope ladders, the rest of our party descended to a kind of rough ledge on the mountain side. Here the dog, which had been put on the leash, became very excited, and it was difficult to keep it in hand. Suddenly the hound began to bay furiously, at the same time his master shouted to us to follow quickly, so I knew that some discovery had been made.

* * * * *

When Isaac and the lad had departed, Leah climbed some sheltered rocks where she could observe the approaching lights of their pursuers, and hear her husband's signal when he again wanted the rope lowered, for the two men had decided to remain near the pit entrance, climbing the rocks so that they could watch without danger.

In less than half-an-hour they heard the yelp of a dog overhead, and the sound of several voices, and Ismael felt a qualm as he thought of the safety of Leah, and

wondered if she had been fortunate enough to escape observation.

At last an approaching light showed the figure of the foremost man coming carefully along the ledge, for the wind was raging with the force of a hurricane ; he was preceded by a dog on the leash. The animal, his nose well to the ground, was pulling furiously, so that the man had hard work to keep him in till he arrived at the pit's mouth. Here he barked and sniffed the air, evidently trying to show that someone was concealed overhead, but his master was too excited at having found the entrance, to heed further the motions of his dog.

With shouts and whistles he hurried on his companions, and in a few minutes Ptahmes and the men were also examining the entrance to the tombs.

To their amazement even the ropes were in position, so that they evidently had arrived while the thieves were below carrying on their ghastly work. At the suggestion that one should at once descend, their enthusiasm seemed suddenly damped, no one appearing eager to face the danger, until Ptahmes, the High Priest, stepped forward. This, however, so shamed Ruma, the incense bearer, that he insisted on being the first. Provided with a lantern, he descended and arrived safely at the bottom, where, had he ventured while Ismael and his brother were there, he would probably have received a death blow before he could alight. The rest now plucked up courage, and, with the exception of one man left as guard, they clambered down the rope, and, having managed to lower the dog, felt equal to face the unknown dangers. If, however, they had had the forethought to leave the hound with the solitary guard, how much suffering they might have been spared.

This man, left at the pit's mouth, hearing nothing but the roar of the wind and the rattle of the rain, hail and sleet against the rocks, after a short time began to feel secure, and in order to avoid the incessant downpour, sat huddled back against the rock, trying to shelter himself. The lightning still continued from time to time to light up the dreary outlook, above, the thunder became more and more distant.

At last overcome by the fatigue of his mountain climb, he began to nod, and so cautiously did Ismael and Joseph creep towards him, that before he could realize it, or utter a sound, he had been gagged and bound ; then a double rope having been placed through the cords, he was gently and noiselessly let down to the bottom of the pit. One end of the rope was then loosened and the rest drawn rapidly up, after which, the big boulder was little by little rolled back over the entrance.

CHAPTER IX

ISMAEL LEAVES THEBES

IMMEDIATELY after Ismael and Joseph had entrapped their pursuers, they collected together their sacks and implements and, returning along the ledge, gave the peculiar whistle by which they had before called Leah. This was answered almost immediately, but some minutes elapsed before the rope was lowered.

When the men were able to ascend they found Leah panting with exertion. It appeared that having concealed herself in a convenient place to watch, she had perceived by the light of their pursuers' lanterns, that one man had been left in charge of the ropes, while the others descended the cliff. She had, therefore, crept up unperceived behind this solitary watcher, and had managed to fell him with an iron bar.

"And where is he now?" asked Ismael.

"Behind yonder boulder. I was busy tying him up securely when you whistled," answered Leah, striding to the place she had indicated. There, bound, gagged and bleeding from a wound behind his head, lay the senseless man.

"Humph!" grumbled Joseph, "a skulking priest by all appearance, a nice feed for the vultures tomorrow." Then troubling no further about their victim, they shouldered their sacks and implements,

and quickly descending the mountain, returned with all possible speed to their hut.

Isaac, since his arrival, had employed his time by drying his clothes before a roaring fire which Benjamin had lit. The old man though terribly bruised and tired, felt now more contented and comfortable, and was eagerly looking forward to the supper which Benjamin had prepared, and to which the party sat down as soon as they had taken off their wet garments.

"Ah, what beautiful jewels!" exclaimed Isaac, after the first pangs of his hunger were satisfied. "What wealth if properly handled! Ah! my friends, I can make you rich, rich!"

"Yes," replied Ismael, "we have hundreds of valuable ornaments and gems, but before we do any more business together, we must make some satisfactory arrangement regarding that necklace. But we can talk another time. Have you all finished? If so, the sooner we are on the move the better."

"On the move? What do you mean?" asked Isaac.

"Why, we've no wish to be tortured to death, if you have. Do you think that those who help themselves to the treasures buried with the dead will be respected? And if, as you say, the necklace has really been stolen from your house and it is as valuable as you suppose, it will not be long before someone recognizes it, for it belonged to Queen Ast-nefert, who died but a few years back."

"Father Abraham!" exclaimed Isaac.

"Yes, my friend, Thebes, I hope, will not see us for some time to come, if ever again. Thank goodness, we have always been prepared for this day, and have kept our accumulated treasures in safe hiding at a distance. Our little bit of furniture and other things can be got

into our new barge, and if they trace us to here, as will probably happen, well—the birds will have flown ! You, also, will have to accompany us, and if you care to place your head in the lion's mouth again, well, you can return by another route and at your own peril ! Now then, let us get to work."

Quietly and swiftly everything was moved from the hut into a lightly built barge, which being housed in a kind of rough shed was thus sheltered from observation. When all the goods had been moved, the doors and windows of the hut were securely fastened, and the barge, with their united efforts, was run down to the river ; their small fishing boat was then attached to the back and they pulled well out into the stream, and were far distant from the city before the first signs of dawn were visible. The heavy mist which lay in the Nile valley affected the spirits of all the party, and little conversation was indulged in ; the lad being occupied in keeping a careful lookout, while Ismael and Joseph plied the oars, and Leah had charge of the helm. At daybreak the south wind began to rise, the sails were therefore hoisted and the little vessel made quicker progress.

Isaac, in the meantime, sat crouching at the bottom of the boat, cursing the hour when he entered into such transactions as the present, and wishing that he was once more safely back in his home at Thebes. But even there, would he any longer be safe ? Eaten up as he was by anxiety, yet he had the hope that he might be able to secure some of those almost priceless jewels, and this gave him some little comfort.

He took little notice of his companions, and the mist still hanging about the banks of the river, there was nothing to interest him ; his limbs still ached from his

bruises and unaccustomed exertions, and at last feeling thoroughly exhausted, he fell into a deep sleep, in which condition his companions let him remain.

The day was far advanced when the reefing of the sails awakened the old man ; he found the barge was being moored near some huts on the western bank, and several men were already engaged in making fast the rope thrown by Joseph. Leah, the lad, and Isaac, were then hurried into the boat, the two men carrying the sacks followed and rowed ashore.

One glance at the occupants of the huts sufficed to show that this little hamlet was a Hebrew colony. From Joseph's dwelling, which was the largest building and stood apart, a young woman and two little girls, his wife and children, came running to welcome him.

Isaac's feelings were not sufficiently susceptible, to make him marvel how a robber of the dead could yet have feelings of affection.

Joseph appeared to be the most important personage in the hamlet, and from the ready way his neighbours helped in unloading the barge, was evidently exceedingly popular. The boats having been dragged up the bank and housed in a shed, the little party were given a hearty welcome by Joseph's wife, who quickly prepared an appetising meal ; after which, weary with their journey, they were glad to retire to rest.

Though Isaac was given but a small ill-furnished room, it was scrupulously clean, and he enjoyed a peaceful sleep.

It was a glorious morning when he awoke, and finding that it was yet early, he fancied that a stroll by the river before breakfast would be pleasant. He therefore washed and dressed himself, but when he tried the door, to his surprise he found it locked on the outside.

Evidently he was not trusted. Vexed and vowing inwardly vengeance for this fresh insult, he flung himself on the bed and there awaited the rising of the family. At last Joseph unbolted the door and entered.

"Ah! Up and dressed already!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," replied Isaac in an angry tone, "I wished to go out and found the door locked."

"Your safety, at present, is our safety, and our confidence in you has been cruelly shaken. Had you had an ounce of honesty in you, you would have proposed to make good the loss of our necklace, as soon as you discovered that you had been robbed, but up to now, no offer has been made; and how are we to know it has been really lost? And even if so, it was only in the flurry of the moment, that you blurted out your knowledge of its true value. No, Master Isaac, in our opinion, you are not to be trusted," saying which Joseph abruptly left him.

How Isaac hated him! An upstart fisherman—a robber, a thief, to talk thus to him, the richest and most respected Hebrew in all Thebes! "Curse you!" muttered the old man. "If I could only punish you!"

Isaac was very silent at meal time, and passed his morning alone on the banks of the Nile, trying to determine what was the best thing for him to do. It was silly to lose the chance of so much profitable business for the want of a little tact! And he at last decided he would endeavour to come to terms with Ismael. The gems were bound to be sold, and why should not he, Isaac, profit by the transaction? Besides, as he had resolved, even if he could, never again to run the risk of being found in the tombs. What then had he in return for the five hundred shekels, which Ismael had induced him to part with? With

this determination, after the mid-day meal he took Ismael apart.

"Now, my friend," said he, "is it fair for a man to pay for what he has not got? I have not the necklace, neither, since the discovery has been made that the tombs have been pillaged, is there any chance that I shall be able to profit by the secret of the entrance, for which, mark you, I have already paid five hundred shekels. Now, Ismael, say, as man to man, does this seem fair or honest?"

Ismael smiled. Aye, smiled till Isaac could have brained him. "Ha, Ha! Isaac! How you are to be pitied! Well, what do you propose? What are you trying to lead up to—come, out with it!"

"You wish to dispose of the jewels," replied the old man, "naturally without danger, yet the risk to the purchaser will be great, yet I, Isaac, for the sake of our old friendship, will help you; I will take all your jewels, and as I dispose of them, will give you a good price."

"Yes, no doubt, as you did for the necklace! No, Isaac, you will have nothing more without the money down—and even then, you will first have to pay for the necklace."

"Pay for the necklace? Pay for what another has stolen? Come, Ismael, deal fairly with an old man."

"How do I know, or care, what you have done with the necklace? You had it, that I do know, and also that you tried to deceive me as to its real value. If you are ready to deceive in one thing, you may in another, and we are therefore determined to have it settled for, before we transact any more business with you."

"Ah, dear, dear, so hard with me, and yet I could do so much for you. Well, and if I pay you for what

has been stolen, what shall we say? Fifty more shekels?"

"Fifty shekels? Why, Isaac, are you joking?"

"Well, well, shall we say a hundred?"

"Neither a hundred nor five hundred! it shall be half a talent, not a shekel less."

"Half a talent!—fifteen hundred shekels!—why, Ismael, you are mad!"

"Nay, Isaac, I am not mad, neither did I mean half a talent of silver, but half a talent of gold."²

"Father Abraham! What robbery! And where, pray, am I to find half a talent of gold?—Half a talent of gold!—why, it's a fortune!"

"Yes, that was your description of the necklace."

The old Jew sat down on the grass. "You've made me feel ill, Ismael,—you, to whom I've been so kind."

"Kind! what kindness have you ever shown me?"

"Why, I've received you so nicely, made you welcome at all hours."

"Pshaw! don't talk nonsense! Well, you have our answer, and if the money is not paid we know what to do—the authorities shall know who had the necklace."

"Ismael!"

"Yes, I mean it. You may play with others, but not with us. You see, Master Isaac, I know you! I know you for a cruel heartless hypocrite, and if you think to make a catspaw of us, you are mistaken. Act straightly, and you can no doubt make money through dealing with our jewels, but not a thing shall you have without the cash down. So understand, you now have our final answer," and Ismael strode off leaving the old Hebrew still sitting on the grass.

"Half a talent of gold," he muttered, "the man is mad! How am I to recoup such a sum? I might give

him a bond at six months, and on the same terms obtain other jewels ; and I might double, aye, treble, that sum in the time. Ha, ha !—I'll have the beggars yet,—the brutes ! the drones !—to think to trick me, Isaac, ha, ha, ha ! ” and the old man smiled and rubbed his hands, as he thought he saw a means of making them serve his ends, in spite of all their precautions. “ Fools ! How I hate them ! ”

Isaac sat facing the north-west, at a point where the river turns westward, thus he could see a long stretch of the Nile valley lighted up by the declining rays of the setting sun. The hills and valley freshened up by the recent rains, and bordered by the soft grey of the distant mountains ; the nearer hills clothed with a delicate green, contrasting with the darker rocky defiles ; the valley itself, rich through irrigation, and the luxuriance caused by the soil deposits of the river, rendered the scene one of romantic beauty. At intervals, the ripe golden corn made the dark foliage of the waving palm trees stand out in relief. But all this loveliness of nature was lost to the dull sense of the old Hebrew. What attracted his attention was a sudden bright gleam in the distant valley. He reached for his stick and scrambling to his feet, screened his eyes with his left hand. Yes, there was no longer any doubt, it was the sparkle of metal in the sun ; several armed men were rapidly approaching. At first, he felt nervous, then called himself a fool, for they were coming from the north, not from the direction of Thebes. A cloud of dust could now be seen rising like a golden haze, and by its continuance and increasing length as it approached, showed that a large multitude must be travelling towards him. Horsemen could be also clearly discerned, and the confused murmur made by the shouting, singing,

and noise of a great number of people, proved to Isaac that a caravan was rapidly advancing on its way southward, and night being near, it would undoubtedly camp in the vicinity.

Here then was an unlooked-for opportunity, by which he might return to Thebes ; but if he meant to join it, his preparations must be made at once, for he had sufficient knowledge of their customs to know that the camp would be broken up at the earliest streak of dawn.

Hurrying to Joseph's dwelling, he sought out Ismael, and told him of the unexpected chance which had occurred, by which he would be enabled to return to Thebes, but Ismael simply looked at him and laughed. Then seeing the perplexed and angry look of the old man, added :—

" Oh, no, it's a deal too soon ! Too risky for us, old boy. No doubt by now, it has been discovered that you visited my hut at Thebes, and if by chance, it came to the knowledge of the authorities that the necklace buried with Queen Ast-nefert had been in your possession, and that you joined the caravan here, it might lead to our being followed and arrested."

This was an objection unlooked-for by Isaac, but his cunning eyes twinkled as he replied :

" Ah, Ismael, how dull you are ! Who could recognize me disguised ? Many a time have I passed the gates clad as an old woman ; lend me some of your wife's garments, and the rest will be easy. And about compensating you for the lost necklace, I've thought the matter over ; well, lad, you know my word is as good as my bond."

" May be," replied Ismael, " but I would sooner have your bond."

" That is what I expected, so I have even determined to give you my bond, for the sum you asked as compensation for the stolen necklace. It's a terrible loss for me, but there, you shall see how loyal I am in business matters ; and, Ismael, I will also buy some of your jewellery on the same terms. It's a fearful risk to take, but I will try and help you, even if you have been so hard upon an old man."

" Pshaw ! drop it ! " shouted Ismael, " or I will slit your wheedling old tongue. Drop it, I say ! Do you hear ? "

" Ismael ! bless the man, how violent you are ! "

" Violent, you skulking old hypocrite ! Did I not plainly tell you that all transactions would have to be for cash down, and now you are trying to worm round, making out you are doing us a favour ? I've no patience with men of your nature ! "

" But, Ismael, how if I have no money here can I pay you cash down ? How silly you are ! "

Ismael thought for a minute, then he said :

" Benjamin can return with you and bring back the money."

" And the jewels, Ismael ? Don't think I am going to part with the money till I get the jewels : if you can't trust me, neither will I trust you."

" The lad can take the jewels, and deliver them to you on receiving the money."

" All right, just as you like," replied Isaac impatiently, " there is little time to be lost, so bring me the best you have, so that I may make my choice before the daylight wanes."

For over half-an-hour the two Hebrews stood sorting and wrangling. The old man's confidence had returned to him at the prospect of now carrying this business to a

successful issue, and in the end, Isaac had chosen ten pieces of almost priceless value, and a number of smaller ornaments for the sum of one talent of gold, besides the half talent he had already promised for the lost necklace.

This business was, however, only completed on the understanding that Ismael should arrange and pay for Isaac being taken comfortably back with the caravan to Thebes.

"The journey was taken against my wish, so it is only just that you should pay for my return," protested the old man.

The matter having thus been amicably arranged, Ismael went to bargain with one of the merchants to give two ladies a lift as far as Thebes. He found the camp already pitched on a large plateau at the back of the hamlet, and many of the travellers had commenced to buy fish and other commodities from the neighbouring huts. The valley around them, so peaceful and quiet an hour back, had now the appearance of a tremendously large fair.

Here rested a group of camels, while their Bedouin drivers unloaded their costly burdens of fabrics from Tyre. A little further on, a merchant was having a large tent put up for the shelter of half a score of fair-skinned female slaves, whom he hoped to be able to dispose of, among the rich nobles of Thebes ; fifty or sixty tents at least had now been erected, some filled with bales of beautiful golden embroidery and laces from Nineveh, others with delicately-shaped vases and coloured glass from Babylon ; all kinds of merchandise were there ; furs from the north, damask-figured silks, swords and knives of highly tempered steel from Damascus, books from Canaan, richly dyed fabrics and carefully distilled perfumes from the far East ; every-

thing that could tempt the sumptuous and luxurious tastes of the rich. Even snake-charmers, jugglers, dancers, and men with performing leopards, apes, and other animals, had joined the caravan.

In another part were hundreds of camels, slenderly-shaped steeds, smooth-skinned asses, and droves of oxen and sheep. Round about strolled the mounted Bedouin guards, for such wealth was not even safe in the land of Pharaoh, and one tribe often attacked caravans which were protected by a rival family.

Over a hundred merchants, their servants and beasts of burden, besides numerous travellers who had joined the caravan for safety, were now preparing to rest after a long journey. The songs of the camel drivers, the noise caused by such a multitude, the hammering of the tent poles and the swearing of the men, however, showed Ismael that for another hour at least, sleep would be out of the question.

In the meantime, he managed to make a very fair bargain for the carrying of Isaac and Benjamin to Thebes, not from any special wish to save money, but for the gratification of besting a man, which seems implanted in the Israelitish nature.

On returning to Joseph's dwelling he found his brother in earnest consultation with a tall commanding Hebrew, who was a perfect stranger to him, and who had arrived by the caravan from the north.

CHAPTER X

ISAAC'S RETURN

AT the first gleam of daylight the caravan was on the move. Isaac, with Leah's help, had been well disguised as an old woman, the boy, Benjamin, was supposed to be a girl travelling in charge of her aunt. Much as Isaac would have preferred riding on an ass, he was obliged to put up with the swaying motion of a camel, which made the old man sick and ill by the time he reached Thebes. Moreover, he felt thoroughly upset at having to accept the terms imposed on him by Ismael, and irritated that the jewels should now be in charge of a stripling like Benjamin.

As Isaac declared, it was far too late and he too ill to transact business on their arrival at the City, the lad, therefore, as soon as they had passed the gates, went to spend the night with a relative.

Although Isaac had been absent for over two days, his daughter was by no means anxious, as her father's movements had of late been very erratic; he had, moreover, told her that the business he had in hand might at any time occasion his sudden absence. Neither was she astonished to see him return disguised, for the crooked transactions in which he so often engaged rendered this precaution frequently necessary.

Tired and exhausted as Isaac felt on his arrival home, he had not been in the house more than a few minutes

when, to Rachel's consternation, he began to enquire if they had discovered any trace of the missing necklace.

"I did not move it, I am positive," continued the old man, "for, bad as my memory has become, I should have remembered that; neither do I walk in my sleep, it is therefore clear that we have been robbed; and, if so, nothing in the house is any longer safe. I have lately felt that the place is watched, and myself followed. If I find this is really the case I shall leave the city at once, for life here under such circumstances would no longer be bearable."

"Then, father, why trade in such valuable merchandise? And how comes it that Ismael, who I always understood to be but a simple fisherman, has such costly jewels in his possession? Believe me, they cannot be honestly acquired, and if he be detected, may not you also become involved and have in consequence to suffer punishment? Why not be contented with the profits you make by lending money to the young nobles and traders?"

Isaac's thoughts recurred to the magnificent gems he hoped to-morrow to have in his possession, and he heaved a sigh as he thought of the risk, but he quickly added:—

"Perhaps you are right, my girl. By the by, have you heard yet from the Prince's messenger?—No! Well, let me pray you to make some new effort to reach him. Think! Surely the High Priest must know him, if, as you say, you saw them in conversation together."

"It is doubtful, father, if I could obtain an interview with the High Priest, but, if I cannot, you have given me an idea. I remember I noticed Horus also talking for a considerable time to one of the reciters,¹ now it should not be difficult to obtain an interview with

that priest, and thus procure tidings of this mysterious man."

"Good, my girl, good ! To-morrow early go to Karnac, and luck follow you. Now I will take my meal and then go to rest, for I am very weary."

The next morning Isaac's household was up betimes, for the old Hebrew had certain matters to arrange before the arrival of Benjamin. Having finished a hasty meal he took a goatskin case from his desk, and then left the house by the back entrance, being careful to notice if he was followed. Believing he was unobserved, he hastened to the lowest quarter of the town where he entered a small hut occupied by a sandal maker.

A big-boned, sinewy man of about middle age sat squatting on the floor, holding a sandal between his feet as he plied the needle through the tough, well-tanned leather.

"Well, Abel, at it as hard as ever I see !" said old Isaac, taking a seat on a wooden stool.

"Aye, master, it is that, or starve. The little bit of trade with the neighbouring towns is now well-nigh killed by the duty they demand at the gates, so that I make more at my own work than by dealing—even though it is the worst-paid labour in the city."

"Are we not all eaten up by our oppressors ?" said Isaac, "and now even our own race grow as bad."

"Aye, you're right, I'd as lief work in the present day for an Egyptian, as for one of our own people."

"Yes," replied old Isaac, "I can quite understand that, you would perhaps hardly believe that because I, in the heat of passion, wrote some straightforward letters criticizing the Government, to one of our brethren, now that we have quarrelled, the rascal hangs them over my head as a menace. And why ?—But in the hope of

extorting money ! If I require to lie down in peace and safety, I now have to pay for it."

" Ah, Rabbi, rich and poor, we all have our troubles ; mine come from poverty, and yours because you are wealthy."

" Yet, my friend," said Isaac, " how often have I envied your broad chest and stout arms ! Do you think, if I possessed them, that I should let myself be robbed as I shall be to-day ? "

" Ha, ha, ha !" The sandal-maker was greatly amused at the wealthy Isaac envying poor Abel. " I find that comic,—ha, ha, ha !—yet such matters can generally be adjusted, providing there is no risk of after-trouble. My strength, such as it is, is very much at your service in exchange for a moderate amount of coin."

" Ah, Abel," replied Isaac, " it is not so much the regaining of a few paltry shekels of which I am thinking, but of outwitting a blackguard. What you suggest tempts me."

" But, holy Father, I did not suggest anything ! How could I, not knowing what you require ? "

" No, no, perhaps not, but you shaped my thoughts. Why should I not regain the money thus extorted from me ? "

" Yes, why not ? " echoed Abel.

" And it can be so easily done " ; continued the elder Hebrew ; " had I been a little younger, I should not have wanted your help."

" Well, master, tell me what it is you wish, and, if you will pay me my price, then I'm your man."

" Ah, it's so easy," replied Isaac ; " a child could almost do it. It is simply to follow a lad and regain a case which will contain what I am obliged to give up to

the rascal I mentioned. Look, in order that you may recognize it, I will give him the one I have on me. There it is," said Isaac, handing the case to the sandal maker. "Examine it carefully. A lad of about sixteen was to have visited my house at noon to-day, but if you will undertake this business, I will defer his visit till later, so that you may have ample time to make your preparations. This case, which he will take with him, will be sealed, so, Abel, I shall know if it has been tampered with. You and your comrades must watch the lad between you, and get it from him, and when you return it intact to me, you shall be rewarded."

"Aye, aye, that is all very well, Master Isaac, but I prefer to know the amount of that reward—the fixed sum. Besides what about if I fail? I shall have to pay my fellows just the same."

"Fail!" shrieked Isaac. "Fail! did you say? God in heaven, you must not fail! It must be arranged so that failure is impossible. Hire twenty, aye, fifty men if necessary, but don't talk to me about failure. Why, I would sooner carry it out myself. Ah, if I was only younger!" sighed Isaac, as he considered the amount.—"Fail" when a sum of this kind was involved!

Humph, thought Abel, this seems a more important matter than the few shekels Isaac spoke of.

"And how many men do you think it will take? Let your servant have fuller details."

"The matter is very simple: now listen! This afternoon, a lad of our race, about sixteen years old, comes to my house; he will leave by the back way and carry on him this small goatskin case. He may join the caravan returning north—or perhaps go to the river to take a boat; he may go straight to either, or return

to the dwelling of a relative, which house he may leave by the back, or the front, to-day, at night, or to-morrow ; but all the time, each exit must be watched, and, when occasion allows, fall on him and obtain the case. I would not have you kill him—unless necessary. But mark you, he is young and active, and no doubt can show a smart pair of heels ; if he once gains a boat we are well nigh lost, but if he joins the caravan there is still hope, for you can have him followed, but the business should be done in the first dark corner or as soon as he has cleared the gates, if possible."

" And the amount ? " asked Abel.

" Well, what shall we say ? It is to right a great wrong, Abel ; to help me to punish a great blackguard. It really means little more than catching a lad and ripping his pocket open. Now shall we say, twenty shekels ? "

" ' To pay twenty, aye, fifty men, if necessary ' ! You may be rich, Father Isaac, but hardly generous ! No, I think you had better arrange with someone else. One does not hire twenty men and undertake robbery with violence for twenty shekels. I'd sooner put in an extra hour or two at my own trade than risk my neck for such a trifle."

" Nay, I think we can come to terms, Abel," said Isaac, in a fawning voice " Name then your own figure."

" Well, two hundred shekels I think a fair price ; say I take twenty men to make failure impossible, that alone will cost over a hundred shekels, there then remains a hundred over, not much to repay one for such a risk."

" Well then, so let it be, but understand if you, or any of your men are caught—not a word of Father Isaac. Is it so understood ? "

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"Aye, master, there is my hand on the bargain. Now, if I have to hire twenty men, and at once, I must have money ; have you brought any with you ? "

"Yes, I happen to have some on me. There are fifty shekels, and the hundred and fifty more are at your service on the return of my wallet with the seals unbroken."

And having finished their arrangements, old Isaac returned to his dwelling, on reaching which he sent down a message to Benjamin, that he must call later in the day, as until then he would not be able to have such a large sum ready.

CHAPTER XI

RACHEL REVISITS THE TEMPLE OF AMMON AT KARNAC

RACHEL had in the meantime, according to her father's request, proceeded to the Great Temple of Ammon at Karnac.¹ She approached by the avenue of crio-sphinxes² at the western entrance³ and ascending the broad marble steps entered the first colonnaded court, and passed quickly up between the central avenue of pillars. At an altar on the north-side, priests were already preparing the morning sacrifice, but Rachel, fearing from her dress and features she might be regarded as an unbeliever, did not wait to watch the ceremony, but entered the hypostyle hall,⁴ the gigantic proportions of which render all other buildings of this description insignificant. In front of her, reaching to the roof, was an avenue of colossal columns, each about eleven feet in diameter and towering above her to the height of over eighty feet, beside which frail humanity looked dwarfed, row after row of these gigantic columns extended on each side of her, every pillar of which was decorated with enormous paintings representing various deities and kings.

Rachel, not wishing to question the worshippers passing to and fro, walked along the centre avenue till she reached the vast pylon built by Amenophis III, which forms the entrance to the further temple as

completed by him. Here she waited, in the meantime looking in wonder at the numerous designs around ; near her on the north western wall was the picture of two boats, one of which, about forty feet long, was propelled by over thirty rowers ; a king stood on the poop, and behind was towed the sacred barge of Ammon⁵. Gazing through the doorway, the chapels, halls, and corridors beyond, seemed to be endless⁶ ; and she began to wonder how in such a vast labyrinth of buildings, where the officials numbered hundreds, she should be able to find the priest she sought, when she did not even know his name, nor in which part of the temple he officiated ; at last, perceiving an attendant leisurely approaching from the inner temple, she addressed him, and placing some silver in his hands, she gave him, as nearly as she could, a description of the priest she sought.

' This seems to tally with two of the reciters,' said the attendant⁷, ' But if he was in conversation with one of the royal party, it would probably be the chief reciter Merenatf, who is at present officiating in the sanctuary of Ammon. Follow me and I will take you to the entrance.' And passing through the lofty colonnades and halls, he conducted her towards an inner chapel in which a service was at that time being held, the beautifully wrought gates of burnished metal⁸ leading to the sanctuary were therefore closed until the celebration was concluded. Rachel was not religiously inclined, but was blessed with the faculty of being able to appreciate beauty. It was this that made her love flowers and feel so influenced by the personality of Horus. The same sense now made her feel impressed by the wonderful magnificence of the architecture around her, and she commenced to speculate how kings could raise such stupendous temples, and so many men

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and women devote their lives to this religion, if their faith was not true. Her compatriots had no places for worship, the head of each household acting as priest for his own family, and, with the exception of the Teraphim⁹, there was no outward show of their belief. As she waited in the temple hall, the clear voices of the singers rose, accompanied by the soft sound of harps, and her spirit felt calmed and exalted by the combined magnificence of the stupendous architecture and the soothing influence of such perfect music, which, being a skilled musician herself she could the more fully appreciate.

When the singers ceased their hymn of praise, the golden gates were opened and they and the musicians, forming a procession in which the priests joined, came out of the sanctuary. After this the worshippers were free to leave, while others entered for private prayer.

Rachel then approached an attendant standing by the gates and asked him to request the chief reciter to accord her the favour of an interview. In a few minutes Merenatf, the chief reciter, joined her, and Rachel, introducing herself as the girl saved from the boating accident, began by saying how she wished, now she was sufficiently recovered, to thank her rescuers and the officials of the temple, for the kindness they had shown her. In spite of her nationality, Merenatf received her kindly. It seemed to him such a pity that so beautiful a being was an unbeliever, and he politely offered to show her the chief features of the temple, explaining to her the different symbols used and the reason of the various ceremonies. Conducting Rachel along the avenue of lion-headed statues of "Sekhmet," he showed her over the temple of "Mut" and described the customs observed at the passing of the dead over the sacred lake

which is formed in a semi-circle behind and at the sides of this temple.

Merenatf then led her along the avenues of sphinxes to the temple of Khons, where he pointed out the statue¹⁰ before which Rameses II had so earnestly prayed for the restoration to health of his sister-in-law. He explained how the statues were intended to help the worshippers' minds to a better conception of each particular god, and as an aid to concentrate their thoughts when praying in the sanctuaries ; he, also, told her how the statues were consecrated, in the belief that the gods would hear, with greater indulgence, any prayers addressed to them in presence of their images, yet, so free from trickery were the sacred rites and ceremonies, that a priest stood beside the divine images, and in full view of the people motioned the Statue to give the answer, according as the priest felt impelled by a higher power than his own.

Before returning to the sanctuary of Ammon, they visited the sacred Ram,¹¹ the living emblem of the god Ammon-Ra ; and he also showed her the temple of Montu, which was being restored by order of Menenptah.

Being a thoroughly good, though not perhaps a brilliant man, Merenatf, priest-like, could not resist the opportunity of thus endeavouring to secure a convert, and cautiously introduced the subject by saying :

" Believe me, my daughter, whether we call him Iah, Thuh, Jehovah¹², or Ammon, there is only one true Godhead, the lesser gods being only tributaries or parts of the Divine Spirit, as our legs, feet, or hands, are but portions of the human frame, one spirit governing all these parts, so it is with Creation—the very planets prove this to us ; although they exist in countless millions, all move in their proper sphere, no opposition

exists in this divine order, all show themselves subject to some stupendous power, some concentration of a perfect intellectual spirit, which we cannot fathom nor realize. Our worship, our temples, are but a means, and a way, of guiding the people to a conception of the goodness and greatness of this Godhead. As are your Teraphim to you but symbols of all that is sacred ; as are the Penates of the Trojans, so are the statues of the Gods which you see around us.

"The Assyrians call God 'Baal' or 'Nisrock,' but think you because the sea has a different name given it by every nation it alters one iota its tides or movements, or favours one nation more than another ? So it is with God's ways ; his movements and magnitude are beyond our wildest dreams and comprehensions ; we can but bow down and worship—not that that can please him, but that thus, humbling ourselves, we curb our arrogant spirits, and more fully realize how utterly small and paltry we are ; and that if there is any after being, it will only be for the best of us. Only what is good can survive, and it should therefore be our one aim to do good and eschew evil, not for the chance of after reward, but for the sole pleasure of doing good one to another, to render man a nobler and more divine being, gentle to the oppressed, forgiving and charitable, this should be the aim of all religion, and, without this result is obtained, all prayers and ceremonies are useless."

Rachel seemed to listen earnestly to all the priest told her, asking him questions and appeared carefully to consider his replies. When she thought Merenatf was sufficiently interested in her, and she had done her best to fascinate him with her sweetest smiles, she gradually began to question him regarding Horus.

"No," he replied, "I know no one of that name."

Rachel then recalled how he had spoken to him, and endeavoured to describe the stranger's appearance. But Merenatf, with whom the beauty and spirit of Rachel had already played sad havoc, became suddenly more reserved, for he knew that the utmost caution was necessary in talking to strangers about the royal party, yet, thinking he could give her some information without compromising himself, said :—

" Yes, I believe I know the gentleman to whom you allude. I was not, however, aware that his name is ' Horus ' but, as there are so many connected with the Royal circle, and we rarely see them but at a distance, it is difficult to remember all their names." Then his ideas as a priest began again to gain mastery, and he considered it his duty to warn this beautiful girl against the frivolous ways of the court gallants, for it was not right to neglect such an opportunity of preventing evil. Yet to Merenatf it was a matter to be touched on very delicately, for he knew it would cost him dear, if the fair one wrongly repeated his words ; and how often do women twist one's sayings into a totally different sense to what was intended by the speaker.

" Ah, my daughter," he began, " the nobles of the Court have the reputation of being but fickle wooers. Believe me it is often better for a maiden to be content with a simple gentleman than to accept the love of one of higher rank."

" That may well be," replied Rachel, " for the life of a court gallant is, at the best, but subject to a prince's caprice. I suppose this Horus, though he may be at present in favour, has really no permanent position in the Prince's household ? I mean that his office is not one for life—like the King's cup-bearer—so that it is likely he may forfeit his post at any time."

"Nay, it is not for me to be a judge of such delicate questions," answered the priest. "Yet I think that the fortunes of my lord Horus are as stable as the royal throne itself, and his influence more likely to grow greater than to decrease."

"But the gentleman of whom I speak," said Rachel, "is of no exalted rank, he told me so himself."

"Told you so himself? Surely then, it cannot be the same!" exclaimed Merenatf.

"If you have any means of communicating with him," continued Rachel, "let him know that I have daily been looking forward to his promised visit, and pray him not quite to forget me!"

"But, my daughter," said the priest, liking the prospect of mixing himself up with the private affairs of one of the royal party less and less as he thought of it, "it is difficult for a poor priest to communicate with one of the royal circle. It is as if we live in different worlds, so far are we apart."

"Well, Father, find the way, seek and push till you gain your end, and I may, at some future time, through this same Horus, be the means of even rendering you a service. Come, is it a bargain? Remember a woman's gratitude is often well worth earning."

"It is a bargain, my daughter, I will do my best. And I pray you, on your side, come sometimes to this temple, sit here and listen to the beautiful music, and gradually the world without, and all its cares and temptations, will grow dim, and the divine peace of Ammon will fill your heart, and in thankfulness you may gradually join in our hymns and prayers of thanksgiving and become one of us, trying to live a life of self-denial and endeavouring to spread happiness among all around you."

Merenatf, however, began to realize that the girl's mind was for the moment more engrossed on worldly matters, than on questions of the deity, or our future state ; and with a sigh he led her out of the sanctuary.

" And now," said Rachel, as they re-entered the hypostyle hall, " I want to arrange that I can see the High Priest or Priestess, as I wish, if possible, personally to thank them for the kindness they have shown me."

" I fear that is out of the question. The High Priest is absent, and her Reverence is far from well ; she is, moreover, deeply grieved through private troubles."

" Could you not, however, ask ? " persisted Rachel.

Seeing the girl was so persevering in trying to gain her wish, he decided to humour her. Leading her to a waiting-room, he communicated with the private apartments of the High Priestess. To his surprise, the reply was that her Reverence would see the girl ; and a few minutes after, Rachel was admitted into the reception-room of Amasis, the wife of Ptahmes.

CHAPTER XII

THE RESCUE PARTY

AMASIS, the wife of Ptahmes, was in great distress, for naught had been heard of her husband, nor of any of the men with whom, three days ago, he started to search the mountains. Ptahmes, on setting out, had expected to return within a few hours, and his last injunction to his wife, had been to keep the strictest silence concerning his expedition ; and she fully realized how terrible would be the anger of Pharaoh, and what a commotion it would cause throughout the land, if the sacrilege, which had taken place in the royal tombs, became known.

To have to keep her anxiety and grief secret, seemed to make the trouble harder for her to bear. It scarcely appeared credible, that Ptahmes and seven well-armed men could have been murdered, yet evidently something utterly unforeseen must have happened. Had there been an accident on the cliffs ? Yet, even then, it was not likely that all could have been killed. Some news surely would have reached her.

Night after night, she had passed without sleep, but that morning nature had at last asserted its rights, and the poor lady had fallen into a deep but disturbed slumber, in which she dreamed that her husband was incessantly calling her, pleading for help—to delay no longer, else it would be too late ! Bathed in perspiration and trembling in every limb, she started up from her

couch. How could she aid him, if she did not even know the direction in which to search ?

Hastily dressing, she ordered half-a-dozen men to arm and provide themselves with implements for digging and boring, ropes and ladders for scaling cliffs, and stretchers to carry those who might be hurt. She also ordered a physician to accompany them, bringing with him restoratives, food, bandages, splints : in fact everything ready for any emergency, for she felt positive that the party could not have been attacked so near Thebes by any inland excursion of desert raiders. Of course if, by chance, such a thing had happened, she knew that Ptahmes and his men would have been made prisoners, and in all probability be already far away in the distant deserts.

It was while wondering what direction to take, that she felt the cold nose of their dog rub against her hand, and she realized how her grief must have dulled her faculties ; here was the best guide, for who could trace his master so well as his own hound ?

She was just preparing to set out, when she received Rachel's message. Yes, she would see the girl ; perchance she could gain some information, even a stray word might be the means of discovering the thieves.

Rachel's reason, in seeking the priestess, was the faint hope that the necklace might have been found, though she felt that if this had been the case, she would have been sent for.

Yet with the cunning of the Israelitish mind, she did not at first mention the object of her visit, but with well-feigned diffidence, bowed to the priestess and said :—

“ I have come over to the temple as soon as my health permitted, to thank your Reverence for the great kindness you showed me after my providential escape

from drowning. No words of mine can express my gratitude to you and all those who helped me."

" 'Twas an act," replied the priestess, " which anyone would have been only too glad to render. It is our duty to try and do good and help one another in misfortune, how much more therefore does it behove those who consecrate their lives to guide others into the ways of truth, to be the first to carry out its simplest precepts. Nay, my daughter, you owe us no thanks, let your gratitude be to the Almighty for preserving your life, and let it be your aim in future to render it useful to all men."

Rachel bowed low, then came the question she most wished to ask : " And has your Reverence, by chance, heard of my poor necklace ? "

" Your necklace ? Ah, I remember," replied Amasis, " you told me after the accident that you had lost one. Was it a present that you set such store on it ? "

" It really belonged to my father, and I ought not to have been wearing it."

" If I remember rightly," continued the priestess, " you described it as of antique design. I myself have a great love for old art jewelry, the ancient goldsmiths having been so much more skilful than those of the present day. Your father could no doubt procure me some of this ancient jewelry should I desire it ? "

Rachel instinctively felt that she was being quietly cross-examined, and that she must at once ward off the danger, so she did not hesitate to lie.

" Nay, madam, that would be impossible ; he only got this by chance."

" Ah, how know you that ?—By what chance ? " sharply demanded Amasis.

Rachel wished she had not mentioned the necklace.

If the priestess made enquiries of old Isaac, then he would know that his own daughter had been the culprit.

"Yes, my lady, it was a mere hazard, a wandering Bedouin offered it for sale, saying he had found it among some rubbish on the mountains ; the old thing had been laying about at home, and supposing it to be of little value, I had thoughtlessly put it on before leaving home on the day of the accident. Unfortunately my father has since missed it, and I dare not tell him that I took it."

"Ah, I now understand your great anxiety to find it. If it is discovered, do you think your father would part with it, or be able to tell me about where the Bedouin discovered it ?"

"I do not know, my lady, but before asking him, I should like to wait and see if it cannot be found."

"Naturally, my daughter. Had it been of any real value, divers might have been employed in the hope of finding it in the river, but from what you say it would hardly defray the cost, even if found. Well, you must come and see us again in a few days. In the meantime, I will have notices placed about, for by chance it might have fallen while you were being carried to the Temple, and afterwards picked up by a passer-by."

Rachel, feeling this implied that the interview was at an end, again thanked the priestess, and with a deep reverence withdrew. After the girl had gone, Amasis ordered that the man who tended the hound should join the party and take with him what was necessary for lifting or lowering the animal up or down the cliffs, and that they should at once proceed down the river by boat to the first landing stage outside the city, and there await her.

She had these precautions taken so as not to attract unnecessary attention ; she herself being quietly driven to the place indicated.

When she had joined her attendants, she ordered the barge to be rowed about a mile down the river, where the party landed on the opposite bank, for Amasis was aware of her husband's theory, that the thieves arrived by the Nile, and thought it therefore probable that he would have there commenced his search.

Having ordered the barge to await their return, they proceeded along the bank, and to her great relief the dog picked up the trail near a fisherman's hut. The animal then started inland towards the mountain range, in the track which Ptahmes had previously travelled.

They had not proceeded far when the baying of the hound made everyone hurry forward, and they there found the temple attendant who had been stunned by Leah. The man had managed to free himself of his cords by working the rope against the sharp sides of a rock, and owing to the rain left in the stony crevices had been able to keep himself alive : though from weakness caused by loss of blood and want of food, he had not strength enough to walk ; yet had managed gradually to crawl half-way down the mountain side, though fainting several times from sheer exhaustion.

After being given restoratives, the man was placed in a litter and carried up to the summit, so that he might show the place where Ptahmes and his party had descended the cliff. Amasis also had to be carried part of the way, the unaccustomed fatigue caused by such rough climbing being too much for her.

After arriving at the summit, Amasis, by means of a rope ladder, managed to descend the cliff and reach the rocky ledge by which her husband had passed. The

hound having been successfully lowered, the rest of the party followed, except two who remained with the wounded man. In a very few minutes the dog began to sniff at one of the huge boulders, and then, whining and barking excitedly, commenced frantically to scratch away the earth around its base as if it wished to tear up the ground. Surrounding marks clearly showed that this rock had been recently moved, and thinking that it might by chance cover some aperture, Amasis ordered the men to try and roll it back. As they proceeded to do this, the dog grew more and more excited, and Amasis could hardly keep still with anxiety. Soon a dark opening was visible, and a noise like the murmur of voices could be heard. Had they by hazard discovered the robbers of the tomb, or was it Ptahmes and his party?

Unable to restrain herself any longer, Amasis threw herself down on the ground and before the pit had been half uncovered, endeavoured to call down the opening. But excitement and fatigue had so weakened her voice that it had but little power ; she therefore told one of the men to shout loudly. They listened, then an indistinct reply could be heard from the bottom of the pit. By this time the boulder had been rolled back.

"Call !—'Is it Ptahmes ?'" cried Amasis.

"Yes, Ptahmes," was the reply.

At this welcome answer the overstrained nerves of the priestess gave way, and she fell forward in a dead faint, and had it not been for one of the men quickly catching her, she must have pitched headfirst into the pit.

It was not long before all the party were helped up and restoratives given them. Without a doubt the rescued owed their preservation to the forethought

of the High Priest, who seeing the water streaming down the pit during the night of the storm, had wisely saved every drop possible, and the few refreshments they had brought with them had been so carefully distributed that they had still a small quantity left for another day.

Little by little Amasis gained consciousness, and when she at last opened her eyes, it was to find her husband bending over her.

No words could express the thankfulness felt by all the party, and those who were well enough, fell down on their knees and at once offered a prayer of thanksgiving to the Almighty for their deliverance.

Thus, what so nearly proved a tragedy, was averted and every one of the rescued felt that a fresh lease of life had been vouchsafed to them.

The rock having been rolled back to close the entrance of the pit, the party hastened to return home as quickly as the weakness of the rescued permitted.

What meaning the word "home" seemed now to have, and never before did the air appear so fresh nor nature around them so lovely as after being imprisoned for so long in darkness. Thus does trouble sometimes make us appreciate and more fully realize the numerous blessings by which we are surrounded.

Ptahmes did little that day except despatch a strong guard to the mouth of the pit, orders being given that the opening should be securely filled in with cement and stone as quickly as possible, and a thorough investigation be carried out to discover if any other entrances had been effected.

The worry caused by the knowledge of the sacrilege seemed small beside the great joy experienced by being once more safely back.

78 THE HIDDEN TREASURES OF EGYPT

Never had the High Priest and his wife passed such a peaceful and happy evening ; the full revelation of how much they were to each other had been revealed to them, and although neither had ever doubted their mutual affection, they perhaps had never before so completely realized its depth.

CHAPTER XIII

MOSES ARRIVES AT THEBES

IT was in no pleasant mood that Rachel left Karnac ; there appeared to be little prospect of her recovering the necklace, and although there seemed now some chance of getting again in communication with Horus, yet her visit had ruffled her feelings, for she knew that she was looked down upon as belonging to an inferior race, and regarded as an unbeliever. She felt jealous of the Egyptians and their works. Why did not her own race rise up and assert themselves ? Untrained in arms, ground down by taxes and extortion ; many serving as actual slaves, the whole spirit of the nation seemed to be broken down.

How she wished she were a man, that she might rouse them up ! She knew Moses, who was daily expected at Thebes, had been trying to awaken a feeling of independence amongst them, but how coldly were his messages received ! The more wealthy Hebrews had monetary interests, which tied them to the different cities in which their business was transacted ; the poorer brethren cared little to lose their time in discussing useless improbabilities, and the slaves, when their labour was finished, felt far too worn out to attend meetings held for such an object, and at which their presence might cause offence ; besides they had sunk so low, that the prospects of freedom, and their being able to

form themselves into an independent nation appeared utterly hopeless.

The idea came to Rachel to visit the Hebrew dwellings, and try and organize fresh meetings, but when she considered her father's character, she knew that he would probably disown her, should she do anything which might be hurtful to his interests.

Reflecting thus, she felt by no means cheerful when she arrived home, where to her surprise, she found her father in an unusually good temper, for Isaac had been thinking over his proposed plan of dealing with the payments due to Ismael. He was convinced that it would be almost impossible, owing to the method he had adopted, to connect him with the attempt to recover his money. Also he had fully satisfied himself that his actions, although somewhat sharp, were perfectly justifiable after the way in which Ismael had treated him.

In the first place the jewelry was not Ismael's any more than his ; in fact not so much, for had not he actually paid five hundred shekels for the right of trading with these gems. Then again he had advanced money on the necklace, not a shekel of which he would ever see again. And yet Ismael, who had already received one hundred shekels on this set of gems, had insisted on half a talent more, although he knew that the necklace had been lost. Yes, without a doubt, Ismael had tried to rob and to take a mean advantage of him, it was only right, therefore, that he should now endeavour to regain that which it was Ismael's intention to deprive him of ! When he had sold the jewelry it would be time enough to think of paying. Ismael had had quite enough money already, it was now only fair that Isaac should first recoup himself.

Having thus fully justified to himself his proposed action, he felt pleased to think that Ismael would never discover how he, Isaac, had circumvented him. For both brothers had violent tempers and Isaac hated disputes.

Yes, he was in a charming humour when his daughter arrived from Karnac, and still more pleased when he heard that there was at last a prospect of hearing from this man Horus.

Isaac being nervous and anxious that every precaution should be taken for the successful carrying out of his plans, excused himself as soon as the midday meal was finished, and hastened towards Abel's dwelling.

To Rachel's surprise, shortly after her father's departure, a message arrived from Horus, stating that as his duties did not permit him to leave the palace, he suggested it would be a good opportunity to show her round the palace-gardens during that afternoon, and that the gatekeepers had received orders to admit her by the private entrance, immediately on her arrival.

It was while she was thinking how quickly Merenatf had been able to carry out her wishes, that a tall, dignified, and well-dressed man of Israelitish caste, arrived at Isaac's dwelling, and on being told by old Hagar that the master was out, asked her to inform her young mistress, "that Moses, the patriot, would like to see her."

Moses at this time, although over eighty years of age, was in the full vigour of his manhood, for having been taught the highest knowledge by the priesthood, he was acquainted with the means by which human life can be extended beyond the usual limits, though owing greatly to the excesses of our ancestors, few have now sufficient vitality to reach the ages attained by mankind before

the deluge, which commonly ranged from eight to nine hundred years, as may be proved by the records of other nations.

Rachel received her illustrious compatriot with every mark of respect, expressing her regret that her father had not known of his coming, and begging him to rest till Isaac's return.

"My daughter," said Moses, "I am personally visiting all the great centres to arrange with the leading men of our nation in every city, to prepare for the festival, which I am demanding the special permission of Pharaoh to hold. We have now grown so formidable in numbers, that if I can infuse sufficient spirit into our people, I hope to get them to rise in a body and demand their right to leave the country and form themselves into an independent nation.

"There is, unfortunately, a tendency among our wealthier brethren to enrich themselves by usury and trading, therefore they are averse to do anything which may be hurtful to their commercial enterprises, and those who have not sufficient energy or capital to engage in these pursuits, for the most part refuse to work at mechanical labour so that the government has to employ them on public works in order to keep them from starvation; others are sold as slaves. The Egyptians naturally grumble at being obliged to provide public work in order to feed strangers, for such relief should be reserved only for their own poor."

"Why, I ask, should our nation sink so low? It is therefore the aim of my life to raise them up and convert these slaves into men, and I want all the leading spirits of our nation to assist me in my endeavours. The Egyptians themselves wish to be relieved from this drain on their finances, and if I can only prevail on

the obstinacy of Pharaoh himself, I believe this great undertaking may be achieved. What most disheartens me is the utter apathy of our own people, as long as they can be supplied with the necessities of life by others, they are perfectly listless, and sullenly refuse to work if not kept to it by the whip of the taskmasters, or reduced to slavery."

"Master," said Rachel, "you will be glad to hear that the Crown Prince is at present in Thebes ; he, I believe, views your ideas with favour, and this being so it should greatly influence those of our nation who are in the City to join the movement. How I wish I were a man that I might aid you—but a woman, what can she do ? "

"My daughter," replied Moses, "when you are older you may learn that the good and bad in mankind is chiefly due to woman's influence, and there is no greater human power than hers. As a proof, it is through her guidance that the minds of children are moulded, and that they become honest or deceitful ; good-hearted or selfish ; and the good and evil does not stop there, wickedness spreading more rapidly than righteousness, and the neglected mind quickly degenerates back to the brute, with all its instincts of greed and avarice, from which germinate so many crimes, and evil characters like rotten fruit soon corrupt the good. And when man has fully developed, what is generally the greatest passion which controls him, but his love of woman ?—whose subtle mind governs him often without his knowledge. Remember the parable of Eve and the apple. No, my child, you, a woman, have far more chance to influence events than the ordinary man ; moreover, to you personally has been given that special gift, beauty—by which so much good or evil can be wrought ! "

"Master!" replied Rachel, "you have but to show me how I can serve you, and my youth and what beauty I may have, even to my life itself, I will freely offer for the good of our nation. Yet I fail to see how my small aid can help in this great undertaking.—Stay! I happen to know a gentleman, who, I believe, is among the Crown Prince's retinue, through him I might find some means to interest still further the Prince in our favour, it is but a chance, but, at least, I can try it."

"My daughter, from little things often come great results. No influence, however small, should be neglected, and who can tell to what lengths a woman's power may reach. Use your wit, and can you but gain a footing in the Prince's court, a time may come when you may obtain a permanent position, and from there it is but a step to enter Pharaoh's household. I, myself, am collecting all our people together in the land granted to our forefathers at Goshen, in order to force matters to a climax, and am endeavouring to persuade all our wealthier brethren to give a tenth of their income to defray the transit of those who are without means. Your father being one of the richest as well as most influential of our race in Thebes, I trust will contribute largely towards this object."

Rachel's heart quailed at these words, for she knew only too well Isaac's overruling vice of greed, and she felt thankful when a few minutes later her father entered, and thus she was not compelled to say how little his support could be relied upon. She then knelt at Moses' feet and asked for his blessing, and with a deep reverence withdrew.

Moses¹ not only believed in himself as a divine messenger, and an appointed leader of men, but had the gift of imparting this belief to others. Isaac was none too

glad to see his visitor, for it was now the hour when he expected Benjamin.

No sooner was Moses alone with Isaac, than he at once stated his wishes.

"I have arranged that all our people shall assemble at Goshen, whence, after Pharaoh has granted his consent, we shall go three days' journey into the desert to hold our festival; it may even be permitted to us eventually to proceed to where we can settle as a nation, where we shall have our own laws and governors. In order to do this, the poor among us must have means of transport, and I am, therefore, visiting the chief Hebrews throughout the country to raise sufficient money to carry out this work. What might be the amount that you, who all describe as the richest and most influential Israelite in Thebes, will give towards the fund?"

"Father Abraham! I rich and influential!" echoed Isaac, "Poor Isaac! because I am careful and do not waste my substance they call me rich. Rich! Why if I were rich should I live in this modest dwelling? Nay, great master, we have little but what you see around us, but I might induce others to give towards the fund."

The calm majestic face of Moses turned towards the speaker, and Isaac felt as if his very soul was being read by the patriot, neither could he confront those steadfast eyes.

"Enough, Isaac, lie not. I know to a shekel what you are worth and how your money is put out at interest."

"Master, I speak truly, I have little money, all I have is invested, yet might I be able with your help to largely augment the fund, having disbursed much in order to discover hidden treasure."

"Pshaw!" replied Moses. "I have no time to wait for the chance of finding hidden treasure."

"Nay, this has already been found. It belongs to no man, and I, who aided in its recovery, have as yet received no return or share for my money or trouble, the men who helped me having taken all. But should I be able with your help to recover this, I will freely give a share to the fund."

"Explain yourself more fully, Isaac. What do you wish me to do?" asked Moses.

"Master, if I apply to the law to help me reclaim my own, the government would seize everything. I am old and feeble and have no longer the energy or courage to assert my rights. If I had men to assist me I should doubtless be robbed or murdered, but I could confide the secret of the hiding place to you, so that you would have no difficulty in taking it from those who hold it, and from the amount, I could then give you sufficient for the transport of all the Israelites in Thebes, and yet have enough to help nourish me in my old age."

"Do you mean, Isaac, that you wish me to take possession of this treasure by force, to help you gain what you dare not claim, retaining part for the fund?"

"Aye, great master!" answered Isaac.

"And what," asked Moses, "may be the approximate value of this treasure?"

"Roughly, I should say over a thousand talents of gold," replied Isaac.

"Such a sum would truly be a help to our afflicted."

"Nay, but master, you understand only a part would go to the fund."

"Humph!" ejaculated the patriot, "and what portion would you propose to give?"

"Shall we say a tenth?" suggested Isaac, "that being, I hear, what you are asking from others."

"A tenth!" echoed Moses in accents of surprise. "Why, it is evidently only Divine providence that has placed this treasure in your way, ordained through me to serve for a certain purpose, that of helping your afflicted brethren. And now you wish to appropriate for your own selfish ends nine-tenths, because the Lord has made you an instrument for carrying out His work. Ah, Isaac, you are indeed a worthless agent, and no good shall come to you for it. Naked you came into the world and ere long you must return to the dust." And Moses arose as if to depart. Isaac fearing thus to lose his last chance of gaining even a share, asked quickly:—

"And what then would you wish me to do? You would not surely deprive an old man of all his possessions?"

"How can you call your possessions that which you do not, or ever have possessed? The Lord has evidently only selected you to prove your heart, knowing you are rich and prosperous, you therefore should be above trying to grasp that which is intended to benefit our nation. It is now proved that you are a thing of naught, rich in worldly dross, but miserably poor in any sentiment of right."

"Nay then, master, tell me what you desire?"

"You have already sufficient wealth for your needs," replied Moses, "without coveting more. Those who now possess this treasure no doubt consider they have as good, if not a better claim to it than you; but if, as you say, you have laid out money in order to obtain it and they have equal claims, you and they should have that which you lately designated as the share of the Lord, namely one tenth. What is good enough for

the Almighty, is surely sufficient for Isaac and his helpers."

"Holy Abraham! Am I, because I offered to give a share of my wealth for the good of our race, to be deprived of my property? Is this justice? Why, I should receive more consideration from the Egyptians. Let the matter therefore rest. If you in the name of the people are not contented with a just share, well let them go without. Now, master, I must attend to my affairs, so I will ask you to excuse me," said Isaac, rising from his seat.

"'Tis rather amusing for you to try and quarrel about what you have not got, or without my help are likely to get, but from what I heard from Joseph I think I can do without you."

"Joseph! Has Joseph approached you?" asked Isaac, "the villain! That is the man who has robbed me, master. But he shall be punished. As he acted thus I will give you full information regarding the secret hiding place, simply accepting the terms you, yourself, offered me; namely one-tenth. Say, is it a bargain, master?"

Moses regarded the anxious face of Isaac, and was pleased to see that his chance shot had told. On his journey south with the caravan he had visited Joseph, where he had seen Isaac without the latter being aware of it. Joseph had also taken the opportunity of asking his advice as to the best means of disposing of some ancient jewelry he had found. The supple brain of Moses at once associated these facts, and he felt he had the key of the position. Yet if he attempted to bargain with Ismael and Joseph, he would be given only a small share of the jewels, if any; on the other hand, if the hiding place was revealed by Isaac, nearly the whole of this wealth, which he at present believed to be simply treasure trove, would be at his disposal for his afflicted

brethren. He, however, thought it would still be as well to prove this further, therefore he added :—

“ But how know you that the treasure is still in Joseph's possession ? ”

“ Why, master, confidentially I may say, I, but two days ago, examined it myself.”

Two days ago was the time that Moses had seen Isaac at Joseph's, so everything tallied, he therefore said :—

“ Well, Isaac, feeling this treasure has been brought to light by the will of God to serve specially as a means of benefiting His chosen people, and that you are the humble instrument He has appointed for this purpose, I will give you the ten per cent. you ask when we have realized on the jewels.”

Isaac immediately proposed that he should draw up an agreement to that effect which the patriot indignantly declined, telling the old usurer that, for once, he must be contented with a man's word.

It was finally arranged that Isaac should accompany Moses on his return north, and furnish all particulars regarding the hidden treasure, Isaac, however, rigorously stipulating that he should in no way be known as the informant, for he feared the vengeance of the two brothers.

As he turned and opened the door to accompany the patriot to the gate, a noise in the adjoining room startled him ; as soon as his visitor had left, he hastened to discover the cause, and there found Benjamin, impatient with waiting.

CHAPTER XIV

RACHEL VISITS HORUS

ISAAC was still engaged with Moses when Benjamin arrived at the appointed hour, the lad was therefore received by Rachel, who, knowing him well, began at once to question him as to the reason of his visit and enquired what it might be that he was so carefully carrying.

"I come on business entrusted to me by my father," the lad evasively replied.

But the girl knew sufficient to make her feel confident that this so-called business was connected with the secret traffic in jewels which she had tried so hard to persuade her father not to meddle with.

"How comes it," she said, "that your father, who I always believed to be but a poor fisherman, now trades in valuable jewelry? How and where does he obtain this? For you must know as well as I, that it cannot be honestly come by without large sums of money. I feel there is something very suspicious about the whole business and I don't mean to allow my father to become involved in these secret transactions nor should I advise you to have anything further to do with such dealings."

"While I am under my father's care, you must know that I have to do his bidding," replied Benjamin. "These jewels belong to no man; they are simply treasure trove and, as my father happens to be the

lucky man who discovered them, he naturally intends to reap the benefit ; in fact, he would be a fool if he didn't."

This was an answer so little anticipated by Rachel that she resented it, for she saw no reasonable ground for interfering, yet she felt instinctively that there was something being concealed from her.

" Well then," she asked, " tell me how and where these jewels were discovered ? "

" Nay, Rachel, the secret is none of mine, if you want to know, ask your father, perhaps he will acquaint you."

" Let me tell you, Benjamin, this is a far more serious business than you seem to comprehend."

" How so ? " enquired the lad.

" Why the priests already associate my father with this affair."

" The priests ! " cried the lad in alarm, " then Heaven help us all ! " he added.

More than this he declined to say, and Rachel thoroughly out of patience, left him alone in the room to wait till Isaac was at liberty.

Rachel did not, however, leave the house till long after Isaac had commenced his business with Benjamin. In the meantime she had framed a plan whereby she hoped to gain a permanent footing in the Prince's household, and full of her scheme she set off in time to reach the palace gardens as soon as the fierce heat of the sun had abated.

On her enquiry at the private gate, an attendant at once conducted her down a side path, then opening a wicket giving access to an enclosed garden, he led the way to a beautifully designed pavilion which they entered by a side door. Within was a spacious marble

court surrounded by a colonnade hung with handsome eastern draperies.

In the centre of the court stood a fine marble group of dancing figures holding pipes in their mouths ; from these and others they held in their hands, spurted fountains, the water, which falling back over the group, flowed into a large marble basin in which sported gold-fish, hiding among beautiful water lilies and other aquatic plants.

Rachel was shewn into a luxuriantly furnished apartment and there asked to rest while awaiting the coming of Lord Horus. The room looked out on to a well-kept garden, to which the sprays of several fountains gave a look of coolness ; beds of gay flowers ornamented the lawns, and the walks were shaded with overhanging creepers and roses. Everything combined to give Rachel the impression that she must have stepped into fairyland, and lying back on one of the soft couches, she fell into a peaceful reverie, in which she remained till a quick step in the marble court aroused her, and in another minute Horus entered the apartment.

" Ah, my lord, you indeed dwell in a paradise, no wonder you dislike to quit this arcadia to visit the abodes of us less favoured mortals."

" Fair mistress, be not too hard on your servant, you little know how many are the duties I have to perform, else think you not that beauty so fair as yours, is not to me ten thousand times more attractive than the prettiest of flower gardens ? "

" Fine words, my lord, but experience has shewn me that in your case, at least, it is a fallacy. Could you not even spare one little hour to come and see us as you promised ? "

" If you only knew how hard it has been to keep from neglecting my duties to come and enjoy your society, you would consider that I deserve praise instead of censure. Come, forgive me for what I could in no way control, and let me show you all the beauties of my prison house. Perhaps among the flowers some may take your fancy, and you might care to have them in your own garden. It is only when I see that it gives pleasure to others, that I appreciate the beauty of this retreat. If I could constantly see such a one as yourself here, then would it indeed seem paradise ; but when you are gone, the emptiness of it all will come back to me, for what flower can outshine a fair woman ? "

" Ah, my lord, I fear your pretty sayings will turn my poor brain. Remember I am but a simple maiden, and not accustomed to court compliments."

" If you only knew how tired I am of those ceremonies, you could better appreciate how happy I feel to be brought in contact with a natural character such as yours. Come ! " he said, leading her into the garden, where he pointed out to her the most beautiful lilies, gorgeous flowers selected from the interior of Africa, and many other botanical treasures which Rachel now beheld for the first time.

" Daily has my old father hoped to have heard that you had done something to forward the business he proposed to you," remarked Rachel. " Can it be, as he himself fears, that you did not consider the terms he offered sufficient, and that by delay you hoped he might be induced to offer you a firmer offer or a larger percentage ? "

Over Horus' face passed for a minute a look of extreme annoyance which, however, as quickly gave place to an amused look, as he replied :

" Nay, fair maiden, I fear one not brought up in the ways of commerce is but a bad business man, neither do I care to speak on money affairs to my comrades. What I can I lend gratuitously, or give if able ; but those unaccustomed to commerce are unacquainted with its ways, and do not look with much favour on a moneylender's tout."

" Nay, my lord, be not offended, my father's hope was that his proposition might find favour in your eyes, and be of some commercial advantage to yourself."

" And to him," added Horus with a smile. " Nay, let us talk of other than mercenary affairs."

" And was it then for this that you kept away from us ? " said Rachel.

" Will you then be satisfied with nothing but the truth ? Then let me confess it was the beauty of fair Rachel alone which kept me from coming. Feeling that I was losing my head where my heart was already involved, I felt for both our sakes it was wiser to avoid seeing you."

" Is the Israelitish maiden then so low in my lord's eyes that she is beneath his notice ? " saying which Rachel gave Horus one of those languishing looks which sent a thrill through his whole being.

" Oh, adorable one," he murmured, clasping her round the waist. " How great is your power ! Could any mortal resist the fascination of those eyes ! "

Rachel gave a pleased little laugh. " Ah, my lord, I fear you but mock me."

" Mock you, dear girl ! Have I not thought of you day and night since I saw your fair face for the first time at Karnac, and fought with myself for fear my love might bring trouble to you even if I found favour in your eyes ? "

"Ah, my lord, how can I but think that you are playing with me?"

"Why," answered Horus, "ask anything which I can give to let me prove my sincerity, and let the gage be but a love kiss from your sweet lips."

"Oh, let us sit down, my lord, your impulsiveness overwhelms me! How can I think of my wants at such a moment, and yet there are so many that you could no doubt grant me. But this sudden avowal, my lord, has so surprised me that my poor wits are dazed, and yet one great desire so fills my life that even now it comes first to my mind; it is concerning my twin brother whom my father disowns. He, the living likeness of myself, is disinherited, for he refuses to take part in my father's schemes. It is my great object in life to be of use to him, to find him some post worthy of his intellect and thus make him independent of my father. Would it be possible for you, for he is a gentle youth, to procure him a position in the Crown Prince's household? He is a ripe scholar and would be ever ready to carry out your wishes."

"Ah, that is a matter surely which touches the Prince more than I, and which hardly rests with a poor scribe."

"Oh, never mind, my lord, perhaps in your zeal you exaggerated your position in the Prince's household; you have committed no crime, all is fair, they say, in love and war, yet, in future, I pray you, be more frank with me. Though this is not a surprise, for I may tell you that my father, wishing to communicate with you, made enquiries at the palace, and none of the officials knew of any individual about the court answering to the name and description of Lord Horus."

"Oh, indeed!" replied Horus, "it has then pleased your father to try and turn spy upon my actions, surely

his is a curious method of showing gratitude for saving his daughter's life."

" Nay, my lord, be not so ready to accuse him of deceit, surely, if he has committed a fault, it is the result of your own actions ? "

" Ho, ho ! Is the little maid so fiery ? Think you that the inner life of the Prince's household is to be learnt by the first enquirer at the gates ? By Ammon, it would be better for the slaves to have their tongues cut out, than thus prate of their master's doings ! You little know how we at Court have to guard our own affairs. And why, pray, do you so want your brother to be in the Prince's service ? Is he another who wishes to worm his way into our doings ? "

" Nay, my lord, how harshly you view the world."

" The world, my friend, is worthless—Self, Self, Self ! There is not an honest, generous man in ten thousand, and if you know one, guard and cherish him as the apple of your eye ; for he has a higher code of honour than the ordinary mortal ; but the same man generally makes as bitter an enemy, as he is a good friend. Well, you have not answered my question yet, what seeks your brother at court ? "

" My lord, a good kind master, with sufficient allowed him to cover his daily necessities. It was because you said yourself, that you were in the Prince's household, that the idea came to me, that if he could but there gain service, he would, at least, have a friend. He is gentle and well cultured, and I had hoped might have even become your attendant, and thus by chance, gain the protection of Prince Seti, who, has shown himself in no way a bigot against the Israelites ; in fact, it is rumoured among our nation, that he is urging Pharaoh to allow Moses to lead his countrymen out of the country,

and thus end the continual disputes between the two nations."

" You are perfectly right in your conjectures," replied Horus, " for even to-morrow, I know that the Crown Prince has an appointment with Moses to discuss a means to ensure Pharaoh's consent."

" With Moses, my lord ? I knew our patriot was in the City, but had no idea he would be thus honoured."

" Yes," said Horus, " the Crown Prince has a great admiration for the energy and courage of your great countryman."

" You can then understand, how a daughter of a down-trodden race can feel thankful and interested in a Prince who may perhaps be the means of freeing her people. How I trust you will foster his inclinations to achieve this end ! In no household in the land would I sooner see my brother placed, for not only would he be free of the slights so bitterly given to those of our nation, but should the prince, through your influence, take a fancy to him, why might he not even rise to a good position ? Others of our nation have been thus favoured. Think of Mered, to whom Pharaoh gave his daughter Bithiak, and Joseph, who took as wife Asenath, daughter of Potipherah, High Priest of Heliopolis. These men found favour in the eyes of the greatest, and though Eli may not rise to an equal height, yet he may attain honour and comfort. It rests with you, my lord, if you will help him on the first step of the ladder by granting my request, truly you will then make your humble servant your slave for life with an ever welcome chain of gratitude. Even now does not your handmaiden owe her life to your lordship ? "

" Sweet girl, speak not of gratitude. Love is a far stronger factor, and as for your brother, it shall be even

as you wish." And kissing her gently he led her to a more secluded part of the garden.

Thus commenced Horus's liaison with Rachel, his passion growing as he came in contact with her voluptuous person, her quick and ambitious mind guiding her how to bind him more firmly to her will, and yet never letting him be surfeited with her companionship.

When Rachel left the palace, she bore with her a letter for Prince Seti, to be delivered by her brother to the Prince at Memphis, where he would be in a fortnight's time.

CHAPTER XV

BENJAMIN'S BUSINESS IN THEBES

IMMEDIATELY after the patriot had departed, Isaac returned to the house to see Benjamin, whom he knew must have been there a considerable time. He found the lad alone waiting in the sitting room, his manner since he had entered the house had altered, and now he appeared sullen and suspicious ; the old Hebrew, however, was full of protestations of good will, which Benjamin received coolly, and refused to commence any business till the half talent of gold, agreed to with Ismael for the necklace, had been paid.

" Nay," protested Isaac, " that can wait, I consider your father is acting very unfairly in this matter, and he had better think it over again, and I feel sure he will arrange differently."

" Then," said Benjamin, " I must return, my instructions, as you know, were definite."

" Nay, nay, lad, be not so impatient, the necklace has been stolen, we are all liable to be robbed, and you must see that your father's request is neither just nor reasonable, and he will doubtless think better of it ; in fact, after such a demand, not one in a hundred would have any further dealings with him. Half a talent for what cost him nothing ? Why the terms are preposterous ! Especially as he has even received money from

me on account for this necklace, and I am therefore already at a loss."

"Well, then, the business must wait till I have communicated with my father," said Benjamin moving to the door—"All these things, I was told, had been fully discussed and arranged before we left, therefore, if you did not intend to carry out the terms, it was needless to trouble me to come so far."

Isaac saw that it was no good trying any longer to bluff the lad, and therefore, with a sigh, he paid the half talent. Benjamin then took out the jewels singly, so that Isaac might examine each separately, to assure himself that they were in the same condition as when he selected them, telling the old man, that if there was a complaint regarding any piece of jewelry, his orders were to bring it back. But Isaac knew the value of the jewels he had chosen far too well to let any escape his clutches, and a receipt having been signed on both sides, the money was paid over, the old Hebrew insisting on sealing up the goatskin-case, in which he had placed the amount, so that no accident should befall it.

In the meantime, he was congratulating himself that Benjamin had been detained so long; for it would give Abel a better chance of robbing him without being observed.

On taking leave of the lad he said:—

"I don't blame you for carrying out your father's instructions, but he has been hard—very hard!—You had better go out by the back, as you may be watched," Isaac added, as he led the way.

"Nay, sir, I have friends waiting for me in the front," replied the lad, "therefore, I will take the risk."

A nasty expression crept over the old man's face as he heard this unexpected news.

"Friends!" he said, "what have friends to do with our business?"

"Nothing, but as I have now a considerable sum on me, I prefer to be cautious."

"Ah! I trust your precautions won't be thrown away," muttered old Isaac with a sneer, as he closed the door.

No sooner was Benjamin outside, than he cautiously secreted the goatskin case about his person; then he hastened to join his friends.

Not only had his uncle Reuben come with his two sons, but they had brought with them four sturdy fishermen, two of whom preceded and two followed them, so that Benjamin arrived at his uncle's dwelling in perfect safety; here their escort left them, as also did one of Reuben's sons, who was a baker; he took the opportunity of returning to the City in a tradesman's cart, which was driven by an old man who called at the house shortly afterwards to deliver provisions. One incident alone had caused them uneasiness, a man and a woman, evidently unacquainted with each other, seemed so interested in their movements that they had followed the little party the entire way from Isaac's to Reuben's dwelling.

Benjamin's uncle Reuben and his two cousins, had tried in every way to study the lad's safety, and all the precautions they could think of were taken to prevent him suffering from any treachery, for they considered after what Benjamin told them, that no scheme was too vile for old Isaac to attempt; they had, at first, proposed to conduct the lad back to his father, guarded by a dozen well-armed men, but after

Rachel declaring that the priests already connected Isaac with the robbery of the jewels, and Reuben's belief that they had been followed from Isaac's house, it was considered advisable that the lad should leave Thebes as secretly as possible, and a plan had been thought out, which they hoped would render it most improbable that he could be traced beyond the City.

Later when Isaac joined Abel, who from a sheltered position had been watching Reuben's house, he found the sandal-maker in none too good a humour ; Benjamin's escort had by no means been bargained for ; to attack a lad when alone, was one thing, but when accompanied by seven well-armed, active men, was totally different, for the City guard would have been on the spot long before such a formidable party could have been overpowered. Abel had had two men placed so as to be able to watch the front, and two at the back of Reuben's dwelling, but except the old man leaving the provisions and returning with his empty basket, accompanied by Reuben's son, no one to their knowledge, had entered or left the house ; several men were also stationed at various City gates, not knowing what direction Benjamin might take after leaving Reuben's house, and others in boats were watching different parts of the river.

It, however, now seemed as if Benjamin did not propose to set out that night, for it was already nearly the hour for closing the City gates, and Abel's men were commencing to be ill-tempered, for they had been assured that the business would be carried out briskly ; now, apparently, nothing was being done, and they feared that they might be arrested as loiterers, by the City guard.

Isaac was anxious, and when he again came to see how matters were progressing, Abel bluntly asked him :

" How much longer do you wish my men to wait ? Suppose the lad proposes to join the caravan, which will not return from the south for several days, do you intend to hire men to keep watch day and night till then, when Reuben may send a dozen men to guard his nephew till he arrives at his destination ? Of course, you know better than I what the game is worth on either side."

" Well, what can I do ? What do you propose ? " asked Isaac.

" I ? " replied Abel, " I don't propose anything, only if I were you, I'd make sure of my pigeon while he's here."

" How ? "

" Why, by simply entering the house this very night," replied the sandal-maker. " It could not be a great job. There's Reuben, and his elder son ; for the baker I hear never returns from the bakehouse till about six in the morning. But mark you, I don't have any hand in a burglary unless I have extra pay."

" Extra pay ? How much extra ? It's always ' money ! ' ' money ! ' "

" You don't think I do these things for pleasure, do you ? " retorted Abel.

" No, perhaps not," said Isaac, " but there would be dozens of things you might pick up when once in the house, which would more than repay you. Well, how much do you want ? " asked the old man as he walked impatiently backwards and forwards.

" First I should require one man with me, and half-a-dozen more, handy in case there is trouble, they

would require fifty shekels, and a hundred for myself, makes one hundred and fifty."

"What? A hundred and fifty shekels for half-an-hour's work? Why you might even find the letter-case without a blow being passed—Besides, think of what you might pick up!"

"Pick up!" echoed Abel, angrily. "I've no patience with you!—Say, is it a bargain? Yes;—or No?"

"A hundred and fifty shekels more! It's terrible!"

"Just as you like. I'm none too eager for the business," replied Abel.

In the meantime, Isaac was carefully weighing the chances—with so many men, Abel could hardly fail to be successful—then, considering the large amount he was nearly sure to regain, he decided to risk it.

* * * * *

Reuben's little household, unconscious of the plans which were being made, passed a happy and cheerful evening; Reuben being particularly contented that his arrangements had in no way miscarried and he looked forward without anxiety, to passing, as usual, a peaceful night.

CHAPTER XVI

ARREST OF ISAAC

ABOUT three o'clock next morning, two men quietly entered Reuben's house, and after about half-an-hour, the same two individuals, with equal caution, let themselves out ; one was Abel, and in his hand was the goatskin case, which Isaac had given Benjamin. So noiselessly had the theft been carried out, that the inmates were unaware that the house had been entered. Abel's object was to procure the wallet ; the household nicknacks were of little value, and would have been but a source of danger. After carefully examining the wallet, a smile flitted over his face, and he returned to his hut. Reuben also smiled when the case was missed, for he guessed what had happened.

It was with a self-satisfied manner that Abel presented himself at Isaac's dwelling during the morning, and the old Hebrew looked pleased as he welcomed him.

" Well, I hope you have got it," he said.

" Yes," replied Abel, " all was quietly and quickly carried out, no noise, and no one even aware that we had entered."

" Good, good ! " murmured Isaac, " and the wallet ? Where's the wallet ? "

" Here it is, Master ! See, your seals are intact, as stipulated ; look, and examine it well, ere you receive it, for I want no after disputes."

"Yes, yes, all seems in order, give it me," said Isaac impatiently, but Abel did not seem in such a hurry.

"Do you see that the seals are unbroken?"

"Yes, it's all right!"

"Then, Master, I require my three hundred shekels, before I hand it over. I have heard much of Master Isaac's sharp practices, and I don't intend to experience them."

"Abel! this is abominable!—playing about with me, when I have so trusted you."

"Here is the wallet," replied Abel, "hand over the balance of the money, and it is yours."

Muttering curses, the old man paid the amount, and Abel having carefully counted and pocketed it, placed the case on the table.

How light it seems, thought Isaac, as he took it up quickly, then impatiently tearing the seals open, he gave a groan and fell back into the chair.

"Villain! you have robbed me!" he shouted, "the case has been cut open and the money taken!"

"Now none of your bad temper, Isaac! I may be poor, but I won't stand insult, I have carried out my contract; if you are robbed, that is none of my affair, I have not done it."

"Scoundrel! look! it is empty! One-and-a-half talents,¹ you rascal!"

"What!" cried Abel, "why you said it was only a trifle. You thundering old liar!"

"Well, if you have not taken them, it must have been that cursed boy!" muttered the old man. "You surely haven't dismissed your men till you knew if all was right?"

"Of course I did, you said you only wanted the wallet with the seals intact, and now you have it, you

don't appear satisfied. Why not have spoken the truth, and we should then have known what to be at."

"Come, it's no good waiting here," cried Isaac.

"No, so I see!" said Abel moving away.

"Idiot! you mustn't go, we haven't found the boy."

"Now then, who are you calling idiot?" shouted Abel, seizing Isaac by the collar and shaking him, "if you weren't an old man I'd brain you!"

Isaac sank down again helplessly in the chair.

"How foolish you are, Abel!—Can't you see, that if you wish to gain money, you will do so more easily, by helping, than by tormenting me. Come, we must find out if this young scorpion is still in Thebes," and putting on his robe and cap, he, accompanied by Abel, hurried off to Reuben's house.

As it so happened, Reuben saw the two approaching, and recognized Isaac's companion, as the man who yesterday followed the party. Abel, not wishing to be seen, did not, however, accompany Isaac to the door, which was opened by Reuben himself.

"Well, what do you want?" he roughly asked.

"I have simply called to see Benjamin, if you will kindly tell him that Isaac is here."

"Benjamin? Why, he left Thebes yesterday; in fact, directly after returning from your house."

"Impossible!" exclaimed old Isaac.

"How do you mean 'impossible,' when I have just told you it was so?"

And without another word, he slammed the door in Isaac's face.

The old man was in a fury, never before had he been treated so rudely by one of his own class, by most of whom he was respected. As for the information about

Benjamin, it was doubtless a mere blind ! Striding up to Abel he asked him angrily :

" What is the meaning of this ? Reuben asserts Benjamin left Thebes yesterday afternoon, if then you had your men back and front, as you say, how could the lad have escaped you ? "

" Ah, that is beyond me ! On the other hand he may be in the house all the time. Do you wish to have the place watched again ? "

" Watched ? You fool, if he didn't go yesterday, he was off probably the instant after you dismissed your men. No, that's useless, but walk with me as far as my house, and I will try and decide what had now better be done."

The streets were fairly crowded and they had nearly arrived at Isaac's dwelling before the old Hebrew noticed that there was quite a crowd before his house. Stopping suddenly he said :

" Look, Abel, something must have happened ! "

" Aye, master, but I don't understand why the guard of Amen are there."

" The guard of Amen ! Nay, Abel, look again, you must be mistaken ! Better still, quietly go and find out what's the matter, while I await you here."

" Nay, Isaac, I think I'll return home, I don't want to get mixed up in any trouble through you. Goodness knows what devilry you may have been up to, and if it is an affair which brings you into the power of the priesthood it is likely to go hard with one of our nation."

And before the old man could reply, he found himself alone. For a minute or two he hesitated, and then decided that it would be just as well to try and find out what might be wrong, before returning to his

house. He was in the act of retracing his steps, when a tall, slim Egyptian approached him and said quietly :

" Nay, Isaac, you must return with me to your dwelling, and explain some matters we have against you. If you wish to know by whose authority I act, it is by order of Lord Ptahmes, Piromis of the City. Give me your hand," and taking the old man's wrist, he commenced placing on a handcuff.

" No, not that ! Pray, not that ! I will go quietly."

But the officer knew no pity, and with a snap of the spring, Isaac was chained to his arm.

Two guards now formed in front, two came behind, and one on each side, and the party then moved quickly off towards the old Hebrew's dwelling.

CHAPTER XVII

PTAHMES'S NARRATIVE CONTINUED

VERILY we seem but thistle down, blown about by chance, for how often are our greatest efforts frustrated by some small incident, and our lives even depending on an equally trivial hazard.

Through a girl happening to take the sudden fancy to adorn her person, and being afterwards saved from a boating accident, the desecration of the royal dead was revealed ; the rain on the night of our incarceration in the tombs was probably the means of preventing our death from thirst ; and to it solely do I owe the means of solving the identity of at least one of the thieves. Noticing four distinct sets of prints left on the floor of the tombs by the wet sandals of those who had but just escaped us, I immediately ordered one of the men, who is a fair draughtsman, to take an accurate tracing of the footmarks, and I have since had similar impressions made from Isaac's sandal marks, and found them to correspond accurately with one of those taken in the tombs. Beyond this and our previous suspicions, our attention was again called to the old Hebrew, by finding an anonymous communication in the letter receptacle of the Temple.

No one, except a baker boy, had been seen near this place, and he was lost in the crowd before the letter was discovered. The missive was addressed to me and

contained only the few words :—" Some of the jewels taken from the tombs are in the possession of Isaac, the Hebrew."

This, in connection with the necklace found on his daughter's person, I considered quite sufficient to justify immediate action, and I ordered his dwelling to be searched, and the old man to be arrested.

The guard, on arriving at the Hebrew's house, found the doors closed ; and it was only when they attempted to open these by force, that his daughter appeared, and angrily demanded their business.

" We seek Isaac, the Hebrew," answered the chief.

" He is away, and not likely to return for some time," replied the girl, who eventually only admitted my men when she found further resistance useless ; she then quietly continued watering her garden, but at length consented to send the servant to look for Isaac. The old woman, who was followed, however, went straight to the Palace. In the meantime, a thorough search was made of the dwelling, without the slightest clue connected with these sacrileges being found. My men, however, succeeded in arresting Isaac whilst he was returning home. The old man seemed at first excessively alarmed, but on reaching the house, his daughter said something to him in Hebrew, which calmed him.

The Captain was on the point of collecting his men and taking Isaac with him, when, to his surprise, a royal chariot drove up, and an officer of the Prince's household, handed him a peremptory order, signed by Prince Seti, commanding that the guard of Amen and all spies should instantly be withdrawn, and that the Hebrew and his family were to be subjected to no further annoyance, on any pretext whatsoever.

The Prince does not often trouble to give a command, but when he does, it is better to obey, even in the smallest detail ; and there is not an officer in our corps, who does not fully realize this. Thus, after even risking my life to fathom the mystery of these robberies, and seemingly on the eve of making an example of a probable thief, the result of all my labour was lost.

CHAPTER XVIII

ISAAC LEAVES HOME

WHEN the guards were withdrawn, Isaac was in a state of collapse. Rachel, on the contrary, possessed one of those minds which rises to its highest power when stimulated by danger, or some other intense excitement.

Happening to be on the roof terrace, she had seen in the distance the guard approaching, and, with an instinct born of fear, she felt that some mischief to themselves was contemplated, and although the chief had been careful enough to send a spy on ahead, so as to make sure of a free entrance, the man found the doors fast.

In the meantime, Rachel had seized Isaac's cash-box containing the jewels and private papers and buried it in the inner garden, carefully watering the place so as to hide any traces of the earth having been disturbed. It was only after this had been carefully attended to, and all traces obliterated that she leisurely opened the gates to the guard. During the time, her brain actively searched for an escape from this predicament, and she decided to write a few lines of appeal to Horus, sending it by Hagar under the excuse that the old woman might find Isaac.

As soon as she saw her father, she warned him that all was safe and that she had sent to the Palace for help.

Promptly as this was answered, it was none too soon ; Isaac having been already told to prepare himself for accompanying the guard, and both Rachel and Hagar had had to submit to a personal search. In vain the girl prayed not to be subjected to this indignity, the chief only laughed at her modesty, and paid little attention to her threats.

" And the jewels, my dear, where are the jewels ? " asked the old man anxiously, as soon as they were alone.

" Safe, but I trust you have at last learnt that you risk too much by such a trade."

" Humph ! How these priests came to suspect poor Isaac, I cannot imagine. And you, how did you even know that I had them ? "

" With me, it was simple enough. I left Benjamin in our sitting room, while you were engaged with Moses. When the patriot had left, I saw you fetch the lad, and I could not help noticing the murderous look of hatred there was on his face, while talking with you. The suspicion immediately occurred to me that he had heard some passing word between Moses and yourself which had not pleased him, and on going into our room to find out if it was possible to discern your conversation, my attention was attracted by some small atoms of plaster on the floor. Drawing the table back, I found, to my astonishment, that it hid a hole in the wall which forms the slight division between the two rooms ; this had evidently been made or enlarged by Benjamin, in order to hear your conversation, which I found could be distinctly heard through this aperture. In fact, there was not, I believe, a word which escaped me, and Benjamin must have been equally well informed of all that you communicated to Moses."

"Then I am indeed ruined," sighed Isaac. "If I only knew if the rascal is yet in Thebes. To think that he could act so meanly, even taking advantage of being asked to my house. Ah, me! I fear he is like his father—bad, thoroughly bad. After what has happened, my dear, we must leave Thebes. I will put my affairs into the hands of an agent I know of, and he shall collect my monies and sell our furniture. You can either go to Memphis or to our relatives in Goshen, and I shall probably travel with Moses and join you up North."

That night their preparations for departure were hastily made, and the following day their dwelling was empty.

CHAPTER XIX

ISAAC SENDS RACHEL TO MEMPHIS

EARLY next morning, Rachel accompanied her father to one of the boats leaving for Memphis. The old man seemed worried and pre-occupied, and it was only at the voice of the captain commanding all who were not passengers to land, that he suddenly thrust a carefully-tied-up parcel into his daughter's hands, and told her to guard it for him until he could join her at Memphis :

"It is of great value, and I may have it stolen if I carry it about with me. It contains the jewels," he added in a whisper. "As to my movements, I am uncertain ; I may wait for the return of Moses from Abu¹ and then come by the caravan to Memphis ; on the other hand, I might, within a day or two, follow you direct by boat."

As the vessel moved away from the quay and Rachel saw the fair city of Thebes extending to the distant mountains on each side of the Nile,² she felt a pang of regret at leaving the place in which so many years of her life had been spent. Before her seemed to pass a vision of the past and a hazy glimpse or foreboding of the future, as her father's decrepit and feeble figure stood watching her departure ; he, whom she so longed to comfort and protect in his old age, but whose nature chilled her affection, and on whose word she could not only have no reliance, but who even deceived her in

trivial matters, about which there could be no object for deception.

The utter falseness of Isaac's nature, was what perplexed and caused his daughter such deep grief ; she pitied him from the bottom of her soul, and longed with womanly gentleness to soothe and comfort him, yet, when she attempted to talk of his affairs, or show interest in his undertakings, he either answered her sarcastically, or if he considered she might be of service to him, he worked on her feelings of pity, but having once gained his end, immediately relapsed again into his usual unfeeling callousness ; yet, seeing the frail old man waving his stick to her, a great flood of tenderness swept through her being, as she thought how few must now be the years that his tottering body could survive, worn out as it was by the restless spirit within.

As his well-known figure was lost to her view, the vessel passed the beautiful palace of Luxor, and our stupendous Temple of Karnac and she pondered on the episode of the necklace, the simple wearing of which, had so altered the course of her life. This remembrance conjured up to her mind the unselfish character of Merenatf, about whom she had already written to Horus, and led her to question herself if the wish to help Moses in his work was not already leading her into deception. Had she truthfully answered Horus's query as to why she wished her brother to enter the Prince's household ? She knew it was a lie from beginning to end, and was this a right way to return the kindness of Horus, who had so quickly sent aid in her father's late danger ? Then might not her growing affection for her courtly admirer, lead her away, and entirely counterbalance the cause of Moses and her nation ? There lay a real danger. Yet if she could but

skilfully manage to make one serve the other, the growing passion of Horus should render him more eager to help her nation.

Her life, which up to now had been so peaceful, seemed caught in a whirlwind of uncertainty, her home was broken up, and the approaching events, which were being hurried to a crisis by the impetuosity of Moses, made her shrink back from the future; and she dared hardly imagine what might be the result of the secret plans she had formed for helping the cause of her countrymen. Nervous and low-spirited she sought Hagar, who was accompanying her to Memphis, and her old nurse assured her that trouble was often like a bogey, which only existed in the troubled mind of the sufferer, and that the future would probably bring a much happier and brighter life to them both. But Hagar did not know of the daring schemes, which, with the confidence of youth, her young mistress had resolved to carry out.

Even in this age, when so many secretly scoff at the power of the gods, most of these pretended unbelievers admit that they are influenced by presentiments, and argue in excuse that even animals are guided by instinct. What is instinct, but transmission of thought? And is not thought the divine essence of the Godhead: the spirit of life, which some call the soul? And these scoffers pretend that animals have no souls, and laugh at the sacred theory in our religion of the transmigration of the spirit.⁸ Where intellectual life exists, there in a greater or less degree lives the Spirit of God, for *God is Life*. These fools can understand the miraculous velocity of light—the tremendous distance we can now regulate the waves of sound—but when it comes to the more subtle essence of the spirit, which in a second

bridges over space, they stand nonplussed, and say it is "impossible." As if anything is impossible to the Creator of all things!

It was the presentiment of the future, which unnerved Rachel and made her wonder whether these things were pre-ordained, and if, after all, we mortals are not simply puppets moved in position by a higher power: she for the moment lost sight of the fact, that her sufferings were clearly caused by those around her, and that her own projects were only adding to her troubles.

Had Isaac told his daughter the truth on leaving her, he would have said that he had already made up his mind as to what he intended to do. All that night he had been scheming. To accept only ten per cent. of the treasure, as proposed by Moses, seemed ridiculous; and never could such an opportunity occur again. It was perfectly silly to leave such colossal wealth in the hands of Ismael and Joseph; they could neither dispose of it to advantage, nor make any proper use of the money when they had it. Isaac had already formed astonishing plans as to what he would achieve with such a fortune at his command; and it almost turned his brain, when he thought of losing it: in fact, he now considered he had a right to it, and he could give, out of such a sum, far more than was necessary for the wants of Ismael and Joseph, and through him they would no doubt receive more than they could make by their own dealings. It was ridiculous to leave pearls with swine, and he began to consider how he could attain his object. Later in the day, he visited Abel, to whom he held forth the advantages to the nation of massing under Moses's banner, and that arrangements had been made to house and provide for all Israelites from distant towns as soon as they arrived

at Goshen. He, Isaac, was willing to help in the transport of a dozen sturdy fellows if they were ready to render him some little service in return.

Abel looked at Isaac and grinned ; there was something in that smile which irritated Isaac and made him feel as if he would like to wring the brute's neck ; but he simple sighed : he had, at present, to use such men to attain his object.

" Well, master, and what may be your little game ? "

Isaac arose and went to the door : " If you think I am going to put up with insolence, you are mistaken. I came to suggest a lucrative bit of business to you, but as you do not seem to be able to render me common civility, I can go elsewhere," and he went out.

But Abel was after him in a minute. He also, was a Hebrew, and it grieved him to the soul to miss any business :

" Nay, Master, you are somewhat hasty. I did but jest, and was far from wishing to offend you. Return into your servant's dwelling, and give me your commands."

Isaac, propitiated, re-entered the hut and said :—

" I wish to recover some property to which I have a certain right, and though there may be only two men to overpower, yet, there might by chance be more ; if the matter was successful, I am willing to pay largely, if on the other hand, it proves a failure, I am still willing to risk a fair amount ; in fact, I will give you two hundred shekels if it prove a failure, and a thousand if successful."

But Abel knew he could make his own terms on business of this kind.

" It sounds, in fact, very much like another burglary business, and I should not care to offer less than a

hundred shekels to each man, and an extra hundred if we are able to obtain the goods. I myself, should require five hundred down and an extra thousand if successful ; good board and passage for their baggage for all, as far as Goshen ; and the necessary arms to be provided."

" Ah, you are always hard, Abel ! But if you engage good, reliable men, who don't mind a fight if necessary, you shall have your own terms ; but I shall require to start early this evening, so as to be able to leave the City to-night. You shall have a good fast sailing vessel provided, and I will see to the boat-hands myself."

" Another matter, master," said Abel, " seventeen hundred shekels will have to be paid as soon as my men are on board, for, if we wait to the end of the voyage, Master Isaac has an equal chance of being killed as any of us."

" Well, it shall be as you wish. Now go and prepare, for the time is short. It is worth the risk," muttered Isaac, " and anyhow, I shall have done my share towards helping some of our nation to reach Goshen."

Having arranged with Abel where the men should meet, he went to hire a vessel for the trip.

CHAPTER XX

BENJAMIN'S RETURN

AFTER Reuben had returned from escorting Benjamin, it did not take him long to discover that his house was being watched both at the front and at the back ; this, however, made no alteration in his plans.

When the old man driving the provision cart arrived, as had been arranged, he entered the house and stayed ; Benjamin who was waiting disguised so as to represent him, then immediately went out accompanied by Reuben's son, the baker, and they drove straight to the quay where a light sailing boat in charge of two boatmen awaited them. After having left the trap in charge of a friend they entered the boat and crossed the river, waiting at the landing stage while Benjamin's cousin placed a note in the Temple letter-receptacle.

"I think Isaac will regret trying to act falsely towards us," he whispered to Benjamin when he returned.

The boat was then steered down the stream and they managed to pass the city barrier before closing time.

While they were leaving the city another boat nearly collided with theirs ; little did Benjamin suspect that this contained some of Abel's men who, seeing that none of the occupants corresponded with the description of the lad they sought, they apologized, and wishing the party a good evening, they rowed away.

There was little wind and the boat had to be rowed nearly the whole distance. It was therefore late the following evening when they arrived at Joseph's dwelling, all being thoroughly exhausted with the continual exertion.

The news of Isaac's treachery set the whole household in a commotion, and although Benjamin and his companions were so fatigued that they were obliged to rest, Joseph, Ismael and their wives spent the whole night in packing their belongings.

In the morning the boatmen from Thebes set out on their return journey; the family, not knowing how soon they might be followed, continued during the entire day to collect their furniture and their goods which, with the help of their neighbours, they carried to Ismael's sailing barge, and by the evening all was ready for their departure.

On the following morning, refreshed by sleep, they rose early. The women and children were made as comfortable as the size of the vessel would permit, and in charge of Reuben's son and a fisherman, they started for Memphis, where it was arranged they should stay till the others could join them, which would probably be within a few days of their arrival.

As the wind from the south-west had begun to rise, the big sail filled out and there seemed every prospect of a pleasant voyage. The two brothers and Benjamin having watched the little vessel out of sight returned to the house.

"My lad," said Ismael as they entered, "we're very pleased at the way you have carried out our instructions, very pleased indeed, for if you had not acted with caution, and Reuben and his sons proved true friends, Isaac would, without doubt, have secured the jewels

for nothing ; for the house would not have been watched in the manner it was, unless mischief had been intended. However, when he and Moses now arrive to seize our jewels for the benefit of others, they won't find much left here and no one except ourselves will know where they are hidden. Now, lad, you must swear, if anything happens to us, to guard the secret with your life, for the money is to be used for the good of our families, for I consider to use treasure which has been thrown aside to moulder and rust whilst the living are in need, is but right, though others may view the matter differently. Thank God, I know you have not the degrading vice of selfishness which leads some even to rob their brothers and sisters of their just portions and thus sink lower than the vilest of thieves. Swear by our God Jehovah to be true to your trust ; and if you find death upon you, give the secret to one only whom you know to be unselfish and honourable."

"I swear, father, and you need have no fear of my depriving my own kith and kin to enrich myself—such a being is only worthy of death."

"Nay, lad, I know your good nature, but for your uncle's sake I asked the oath."

On the following morning the two brothers took several sacks down to their boat, also provisions, oil, lanterns, bags of cement and various implements ; and telling their neighbours that the whole party were proceeding to Goshen, according to Moses' commands, they bid them adieu, then letting the sail take the wind, the boat swept out into midstream.

After they had sailed a few miles they landed on the eastern side where, at a short distance from the banks, steep cliffs skirt the river.

The two men, leaving the lad to guard the boat which they had beached, climbed the cliffs and having gained the summit, travelled on till they reached a rocky promontory, the steep sides of which went sheer down to the river edge ; they then struck inland and were lost to Benjamin's view.

CHAPTER XXI

ISAAC'S EXPEDITION

THE Captain of the vessel which Isaac had chartered for his journey to Goshen, fairly gasped when he saw the set of ruffians collected by Abel, who were to be his passengers. These men were given amidships, which had been roughly fitted up for passengers, though before now it had often served for beasts or freight ; the crew had the forecastle ; at the stern was the little saloon, the cabins of the captain and mate and a few odd cabins for chance passengers.

It was a vessel in which oars and sails could both be used, but as this was the rainy season, there was generally a strong south-west wind blowing, and the captain assured Isaac that he expected a quick passage, unless delayed by stoppages, which Isaac had bargained for according to time.

Even Isaac shuddered as he looked at Abel's associates ; a more desperate set of rascals it would have been difficult to find. However they were kept to their portion of the vessel, Abel alone being permitted to come to the stern when required, and they amused themselves by watching the passing craft and shores, gambling with dice and telling each other yarns of their exploits. Nothing occurred to upset Isaac's peace of mind till after the vessel had passed the fishermen's hamlet in which Joseph's dwelling was situated. When this was

well out of sight and the little vessel completely screened from view by an island, Isaac ordered that a boat should be lowered ; he and Abel were then landed on the western bank, and they went back to Joseph's house, which was the first in the hamlet when approaching from the north.

To his surprise and annoyance he found the building closed and deserted, while the surrounding litter showed that the departure could only have been most recent. Enquiring at the neighbouring huts, he was told that one part of the family had started on the previous day to Goshen, and that Joseph, Ismael and his son had set out to follow them early that morning.

All the inhabitants of the little hamlet were in a bustle as a general removal for Goshen had been decided on ; some were to proceed by boat, the rest intended to join the caravan by which Moses was expected to return from the south. Beyond finding out that the household goods had been sent on by the first boat, Isaac could gain little information, except that a quantity of sacks made the chief freight of the second.

"Sacks ?" murmured Isaac—then it suddenly occurred to him what might be the contents of those sacks, and he added aloud to Abel :

"If their boat is small and heavily laden, they can but proceed slowly, and from the two boats starting separately they most likely have different destinations."

Perplexed and worried, accompanied by Abel, he returned to the vessel, and when on board ordered Abel to keep a sharp look-out for Ismael's boat on one side of the river, while he, Isaac, carefully watched the other side. In a short time, the old man gave a start, and calling to Abel he pointed to a boat on the eastern bank beside which stood a young muscular figure.

"Do you recognize him?" asked Isaac, clutching Abel by the arm.

"Yes, that's the young devil sure enough," replied Abel, "and do you notice a man crawling cautiously up the cliffs with a sack on his back?"

"Yes, that must be Ismael or Joseph," replied Isaac. "Well done, we've tracked them"; the old man felt triumphant, for he believed he had actually surprised the two brothers carrying their plunder to a hiding place, and he sat down in the stern to consider what would now be the wisest plan to adopt. If he surrounded them he might find that they had not the jewels with them after all, or on the other hand, that they had been concealed somewhere so carefully that it would defy his search; he therefore decided it better that the vessel should lay at anchor while he tried to find out what these men were doing in this out-of-the-way place.

Therefore, as soon as they had sailed round a bend in the river, he ordered that a boat should be lowered. This time, Isaac determined to go alone, and having been put ashore, it was with a certain amount of pleasure that he looked forward to the meeting; in fact he actually chuckled to himself as he observed the lad resting back in the boat, perfectly unconscious of his approach. Advancing noiselessly he was almost beside Benjamin before he said:

"Ha, ha! my young friend, I thought I was not mistaken, so it's Benjamin—and what's the matter? Has your boat sprung a leak?"

For once Benjamin was fairly startled, he would just as soon have expected to see Satan himself.

"Why, where did you come from?" he asked.

"From Thebes, of course—from where else?" replied

Isaac. "I and several families are on our way to Goshen, and seeing you from the vessel, I put ashore to ask if I can help you?"

Benjamin happened to look towards the cliff and saw Ismael approaching, and as everything had now been cleared from the boat, there was no danger of leaving the old Hebrew alone, so he said :

"I'll go and tell my father that you are here."

"Curse the rascal!" muttered Ismael as Benjamin told him the news. "I thought it was him. I wonder what fresh mischief he is up to?"

"He says that seeing me on the bank and fearing that some mishap must have occurred, he came to offer help."

A sneer of incredulity passed over Ismael's face, and as he approached the old Israelite he said :

"Well, Isaac, what want you here?"

"Nothing, my son, nothing, I saw the lad, as I thought, stranded on the bank, and I came to offer him help as I do you if you need it. Has any accident occurred that I find you here on the banks of the Nile so far away from any habitation?"

"No, I thank you, we have no need of help."

"Well I am glad I happened to come," continued Isaac, "for I can, if you like, purchase some more of your jewels and take them with me to Memphis."

"About that I cannot reply without asking Joseph," replied Ismael, "I will go and consult him," and leaving Isaac with Benjamin, he went to talk the matter over with his brother.

"Nonsense!" said Joseph, "it is a mere trick to find out our hiding place. Has not he already proposed to Moses to have us robbed? No, my boy, the man is not safe to deal with; in fact, now that he has come

thus far, for our own safety, it is hardly advisable to let him return."

" You surely would not—?" and Ismael hesitated.

" Pshaw ! " replied Joseph, " did he study Benjamin? and don't we know that he intended to deprive us of everything ? How do we know that he is not even now trying to find out our secret and perhaps means to murder us ? "

" Nay, I don't think that," said Ismael.

" Well, I do—you had better keep the old man in conversation while I reconnoitre, for if he means treachery, he dies—it is either he or we who must suffer."

Joseph again mounted the cliffs, and keeping well out of sight, followed the course of the river till he came to where he could obtain a good view of the occupants of the sailing vessel, by which Isaac had arrived. He recognized it as a boat from Thebes, where he had stayed so long with his brother, that he, like him, was acquainted with most of the craft of that city. He at once observed there were no women, nor could he see any signs of the household goods which Isaac had mentioned, only numbers of men who looked of the worst description, and who, it appeared, were kept apart from the crew ; nothing bore out Isaac's assertion of the passengers being families on their way to Goshen, and while going back to his brother, he determined what to do.

" We do not trust you, Isaac," he said, as he came up to the old Hebrew, " and now that you have joined us, you must remain, and let the vessel and its passengers proceed to its destination without you ; you can write a line to the captain and tell him your decision."

"Impossible!" said Isaac, "I have no writing materials with me, besides, it is necessary for me to see him personally, for the man cannot read or write a reply."

"That need not bother you," replied Ismael, "all you require is here," and he produced his writing tablet, from which he detached a slip. "You will write just what we order you, remember you cannot further trifle with us—now write."

Old Isaac was on the point of refusing, but there was something in the manner of the two brothers which made him nervous, and he had no doubt he would presently think of some way of outwitting them.

"Well, what do you wish me to say?" enquired the old Hebrew looking at Ismael in a shifty manner.

"Write—' You can proceed to your destination without me, any reply or message you may have, remit by the bearer.' "

"But I must pay the Captain," asserted Isaac.

"What, you have not yet paid your passage!" said Ismael, "As it happens that does not matter, for I am well acquainted with the captain of the *Ibis*, and I will tell Benjamin to let him know that if your passage has not been paid, he can rely on me."

"How do you know that it is the *Ibis*?" asked Isaac.

"Why, fool, did you not arrive by the last boat which passed? And have I no eyes? Do not I, after being a fisherman at Thebes for years, know every vessel belonging to the city?"

Ismael took the note, which the old man had now finished writing, but perceived it was addressed not to the captain, but to a man named "Abel." He, however,

gave his son the necessary directions, while Joseph remained with Isaac.

Ismael this time went to the cliff to watch how the old man's message would be received, while Benjamin rowed to the ship.

No sooner had the boy got aboard and delivered his note to Abel than the man said fiercely :—

" Ah, so you have now found it more profitable to serve old Isaac, have you ? You can, however, tell the old devil that we don't leave here without our money, and if he wishes us to abandon the expedition, I and my men must be paid in full ; we arn't going to be balked like this. Tell him, moreover, if he doesn't return to us, we shall follow him pretty quickly, Abel isn't one to be trifled with ! "

The lad on his return delivered the message to his father and Isaac heard it repeated to Joseph.

" Ah, I told you so," said Isaac in a happier mood.

" Nay," said Ismael, " you stay and talk business over with Joseph, while I go to see if I cannot arrange the matter for you." Ismael, as he said, was well known to the captain as the owner of a fishing boat, and with that kind of fraternity which generally unites men of the same craft, especially those who spend their life on the waters, he was made cordially welcome and asked down by the captain to his cabin.

" You have, I see, some funny kind of passengers this trip," observed Ismael.

" Aye, I don't like the look of them at all," answered the captain, " from what the men have let drop to my crew, it is an expedition got up by Isaac and Abel to secure some valuables, which Isaac asserts he has been unjustly deprived of."

" Ha, ha ! a very likely story," remarked Ismael.

"The men," continued the captain, "are some of the worst characters from Thebes, and had I seen them before I clinched the bargain, I should have let it go, well as Isaac has paid me for the trip."

"Oh, Isaac has already paid his passage then?"

"Paid his passage? Why he has chartered the whole vessel and I have had everything paid in advance, as you may depend when I deal with such men as he."

"So you think mischief is meant to some poor devils, eh?"

"Aye, not a doubt of it, there's not a man among these ruffians who would not stick his knife into anyone for a shekel, and I shall be right glad to be quit of their company."

There was no longer any doubt in Ismael's mind that this band of vagabonds had been engaged by Isaac on purpose to plunder him and his brother.

"I believe," he said to the captain, "that I know the people they propose to rob, in fact they are friends of mine, and if you can manage to keep the rascals quiet for a few hours, I may be able to warn their intended victims."

"I'll do my utmost," replied the captain, "for you are not only one of our fraternity, but a relative of my friend Reuben; besides I would do my best even to save a stranger from such cut-throats."

Ismael after heartily thanking the captain, who accompanied him to the deck, informed Abel that Isaac would be unable to return to the vessel till after dusk; he then rowed ashore where he joined Joseph.

Both brothers were extremely worried by the information they had received. It appeared they would either have to conceal their valuables elsewhere, or make Isaac purchase the whole of the jewels they had accumu-

lated ; for they instinctively knew that he suspected that their hoard was near at hand, and felt that if he had a chance, he would, without a doubt, bring his band of ruffians to attack them.

The old Hebrew, on his side, believed their place of concealment was not far distant and once he knew where it was situated, he intended by some excuse to leave them : then he would return quickly with his men and seize everything.

The two brothers had a long discussion, trying to determine which was the wisest and safest way to act, even if Isaac arranged to purchase everything, as he had once suggested, it was very doubtful to them if he would be able to raise the sum which their lately gained knowledge led them to believe they had a right to expect, and to let Isaac have anything without the cash, they knew from experience was not safe. At last Joseph, approaching Isaac, said :

" We have decided to give you the chance of buying the whole of our jewels, but it is a question, even with your riches, if you can raise a sufficient sum to satisfy us."

" What may be the amount then that you think of asking ? " enquired Isaac.

" One hundred talents of gold," replied Joseph.

" 'Tis a large sum, but yet on seeing the jewels, I may be able to judge if I can give it," said Isaac, hoping thus to gain the knowledge he required. " What matters," he thought, " the sum I promise ; only let me find where they store their hoard and the rest is easy."

During this time Benjamin had lit a fire at the entrance of one of the caves, which are so numerous in this group of cliffs, and they all sat down to the meal which the

lad had prepared. When all had satisfied their hunger, Isaac was told to remain with Joseph, while Benjamin was taken by his father up to the highest point of the cliffs.

"I am now going to show you the place where we have hidden our valuables. From this spot take a hundred long strides in a straight line towards yonder pinnacle, which is the second highest in this group of cliffs."

The lad followed his father's instructions.

"Now turn at a right angle and proceed to your left for forty-nine steps."

This brought them to the entrance of a deep dell, the rocky sides of which were covered with creepers.

"Take ten strides to your right."

The lad found himself facing a natural grotto.

"Enter by taking another five, then you will find on your left, a little from the ground, a small square rock projecting a short distance from the side ; in the centre of the little ledge formed by its top, if you scrape, you will feel a hole which is now filled up with mould, in this hollow is an iron bar several feet long which goes through the slab into the ground. Pull this up and you will thus free the slab ; in the same small hole in the top of the slab you will find an iron handle, draw this towards you and the rocky slab, which runs on grooves, will easily come out."

Benjamin, having pulled out the block of rock as his father directed, discovered a hole in the side of the grotto sufficiently large comfortably to permit a man to crawl through.

"This is the secret entrance to our family sepulchre. Now follow me," said Ismael, and stooping down the boy crept after his father through the hole which led

into a narrow chamber. When inside, Ismael lit a light by which at the extreme end of the vault could be seen a passage.

"Now be careful," said Ismael, "within four feet of this entrance the floor is hinged on one side, and fastened by a spring on the other; this, when trodden on, gives way and the hapless being falls down into a deep well studded with spikes," and placing a plank over this, he showed the lad about ten feet further on, the square mouth of a pit.

"This," he said, "is the entrance to the tomb."

To an iron bar which was solidly fixed in the wall over this pit, Ismael now tied a stout rope by which he, followed by Benjamin, descended to the bottom, a distance of about thirty-five feet. This was at the extreme end of a passage along which Ismael now led his son. Arriving at the further extremity, he opened a heavy door, and entered a large vaulted chamber in which were several sarcophagi.

"In these are the remains of your ancestors," said Ismael.

"What a frightful stench!" gasped Benjamin, commencing to reach.

"Yes, it's bad. Your grandfather died of the black plague, and we were unable to have his remains properly prepared for the tomb. However, we need not stop a minute. In those two sarcophagi which stand apart on the right, our jewels are hidden," said Ismael, raising the lids. "This further one is full, and the second nearly so. I don't know the value of these ornaments, but the gems alone must have cost several thousands of talents. Before you is the entrance hall; the proper entry is securely cemented and only opened when wanted for an interment."

As the boy appeared faint, Ismael quickly led the way back, and Benjamin had no sooner reached the open air than he was seized with a violent fit of vomiting, and had to lie down on the turf from faintness.

"I don't wonder that you feel it," said Ismael, "your uncle and I have felt ill ever since we entered."

Ismael left everything open, and telling Benjamin to rest himself, he went to arrange with his brother how they should deal with Isaac. Having decided their course of action, they filled the sacks in which they had brought the jewels with dry grass and in another they placed provisions, and a leather bottle of wine. This being done they questioned the old man as to how long he would require to raise the sum of one hundred talents.

"About a fortnight, I think I could let you have that sum": well knowing what he intended to do as soon as he had seen their hiding place.

"And you really mean business?" asked Ismael.

"Assuredly," replied Isaac, "if I consider the jewels worth the amount you ask."

"Well, come and judge," and the two brothers led the way to the dell.

Before Isaac entered they told him to take off his turban and robe to save them from being spoilt by the dirt. No word was mentioned of the secret well, but they at once commenced the troublesome job of getting the old man through the narrow entrance after which he was hurried across the plank, then tied and lowered down the pit into which Ismael also threw down the sacks of grass and took down an extra lantern, a can of oil and the sack of provisions they had prepared.

"What a terrible smell," remarked Isaac, spitting as he entered the vault.

"Oh, you'll soon get accustomed to it," remarked Joseph as he opened the nearest sarcophagus and showed Isaac the jewellery, leaving the old man to finger and examine the ornaments as he liked.

"Well, what do you think of them?" enquired Joseph as he opened the second sarcophagus, and turned over the priceless gems.

"They are good," replied the old man, nervously rubbing his hands as he contemplated the enormous value of the jewels before him. "Yes, I am quite willing to give the sum you ask; I will hurry on to Memphis and raise money there, and send to my agent at Thebes, but for mercy's sake let us get out into the fresh air, this stench is abominable."

"Nay, Isaac, you will have to do all your business by correspondence, for you will not leave here until we have the money."

"What do you mean?" shrieked Isaac.

"What we say! We know you have a band of ruffians here handy to plunder us, but in spite of your treachery and the offer you made Moses, we will keep faith with you."

"Imprisoning me in this smelling sepulchre you call keeping faith with me? Why, I shall die from the stench alone!"

"Nonsense, there is food and wine in the sack, the lanterns will give light for four-and-twenty hours, and think yourself lucky we let you live. If you want to communicate with your agents I can take your letters, and one of us will visit you daily."

"You utter villains!" shrieked Isaac, "not a shekel shall you have, I'll die first, not a shekel!"

"Just as you like, the jewels won't run away, and are always of the same value."

Saying which Joseph slipped through the door which he latched, but did not bolt, and a few minutes after the two brothers, having placed the implements in the upper chamber, reclosed the secret entrance, and followed by Benjamin, returned to their boat.

CHAPTER XXII

THE PLAGUE

DARKNESS had long set in, and Abel was getting uneasy, for he did not yet know if Isaac intended to carry out the business that night, and several of the men had already turned in to rest ; it was, however, quite late before he saw a boat come alongside, and heard the skipper hailed by name.

It contained three persons, one of whom was the same man, who, a few hours before, had brought him the message from the old Hebrew ; the well-known robe and turban of Isaac on the crouching figure in the stern, told him who was the second, but the third was an athletic man whom he did not know. The old Israelite seemed tired and had to be helped on board, and when Abel went to the doorway of the little saloon he was told that Isaac was far too poorly to see him that night, and that they were now going on direct to Memphis, in fact, the anchor was already up, the sails set, the boat towing behind and the vessel was in full sail, before he could even get this information.

Abel, however, insisted that if Isaac was too ill, he should, at least, see the man who had been sent to him that afternoon.

" Now, mister," he said, when Ismael approached, " my men want to know how things are going on ?

From what you said this afternoon, you evidently know all the arrangements, and you had better tell Isaac that if I and my men ar'n't going to be employed, we shall expect the bonus just the same ; another thing is, if we are going to do our business near Memphis, there will be a deal more danger, than in an out-of-the-way place. You see, I was led to believe it was only a matter of attacking an isolated house, with a couple of men and some women and children. Now if the risk is to be increased, then so must be the pay ; in fact, I want to know what the arrangements are to be."

Ismael assured Abel that he need not worry himself, adding :—" The valuables Isaac finds have been removed, and we are now going straight to Memphis, and if there is any extra trouble and danger, you shall be paid accordingly ; that I shall see to, for my brother and I are to receive the same as yourself. What may be the amount of bonus he has promised you ? "

" A thousand shekels extra, if it comes off all right."

" Ah, the old rascal ! " replied Ismael. " He told me it was to be only five hundred. I'll see to that in the morning ! "

They then both went to their respective berths, and Abel assured his men, that all was satisfactory.

A little while after, the captain took a turn at the tiller ; all hands were now resting, and none saw him loose and throw the rope to three figures in the small boat at the stern, which was quickly lost to view in the darkness.

On the morrow, Abel was seriously ill, and a few hours after expired. A whisper going round, that his death was due to the black fever, the men insisted

that the body should be thrown overboard at once, others refused to continue in the vessel. The captain threatened and entreated, it was, however, useless, everyone of the hired band had to be rowed ashore, and the captain and his crew were the only occupants of the vessel when it arrived at Memphis.

The small boat was not destined to go far after leaving the vessel ; the sails were hoisted and the coloured lights lit, as is compulsory on all vessels and boats after dusk ; but, beyond this, the men did nothing ; and Benjamin at the stern, soon saw they were both too ill even to sit up. Being accustomed to handle the boat for years, he managed the sail by himself and returning on their course, in a few hours reached the city of Ta-n-terer,¹ where, by shouting, he attracted the attention of the river-watch on the quay, who at once put out a boat to help him, and the little craft was then towed to the landing stage.

Ismael and Joseph were lifted ashore and seeing their condition word was sent to the temple for a physician, who, on his arrival, immediately ordered all helpers to stand back and he himself lifted the men into the ambulance ; Benjamin, also, was taken to the isolation hospital and the boat ordered to be immediately disinfected.

In a few days the two men died of the black plague, and it was four weeks before Benjamin was well enough to leave his bed.

As soon as the lad was convalescent, he determined to go and see what had happened to Isaac, whom he knew it was the intention of his relatives, had they lived, to visit daily.

At length, he was allowed by the physicians to leave, being given his boat and all monies and valuables, in

fact, everything found on the persons of his father and uncle, as is the custom throughout our hospitals. Then, hiring a boatman, he took with him lights and provisions and sailed to within a mile of the tomb ; then, leaving the man in charge of the boat, he proceeded on foot to his destination.

CHAPTER XXIII

ISAAC IS TRAPPED

"CURSE them!" muttered Isaac, when he found himself alone in the vault. "Aye, I curse them from the bottom of my soul! That I, Isaac, should be entrapped like this, by two common thieves. Damn them, I say! Pshaw! how the place stinks! But I'll get out in spite of them," and in a fury he threw himself against the door.

"Fool, why bruise myself, when perhaps a knife may force the lock?" and the old Hebrew began to manœuvre his big clasp knife. After three hours of picking and cutting, the fastenings commenced to give way, then with a yell of rage, he again threw himself against the door, which, this time, went in with a crash, throwing the old man heavily on the ground. Severely shaken, but with a certain amount of satisfaction, he slowly dragged himself up; the jewels he did not again trouble himself about, they seemed forgotten, and if he had thought of them, it would only have been to regret the hour he had first heard of them.

Taking the light he crept along the passage and looked up the pit. "Ah, I'll have a try," he muttered, as clasping his knife he began to dig out places on each side in which he could rest his feet. Step after step he scooped out of the hard earth, mounting higher and higher, till his exhausted body began to be seized with

cramp, and at last, he was obliged to get down and rest. Then, returning to the tomb, he caught hold of the bags of grass, and taking also the sack filled with provisions, he closed the vault door behind him ; then throwing the sack down at the bottom of the passage under the pit, he sat on it while he began to calculate :

" About thirty holes and I shall be up," he muttered, and pouring out some wine he made a hearty meal of bread and dates. Tired nature, however, began to assert itself, the old man nodded, then drew himself up with a start—another nod—and he remembered no more for hours, he slept as soundly as if in his bed. When he awoke he rubbed his eyes, wondering where he might be, then remembering, he cursed everything.

" I'll be even with the beggars yet ! " The lamp flittered and he looked over the things in the sack and found a can of oil ; replenishing the lantern he again continued to cut steps in the hard sides of the pit, which luckily was under three feet across. Nineteen steps had been cut—the old man looked up in despair, it seemed endless ; on, on, hour after hour he worked. When at last he could touch the top with his hands, he had again to let himself carefully down, his legs were beginning once more to cramp up, and he knew he must husband his strength. Up and down the passage he paced to exercise them, then throwing himself down on the sacks retired to rest.

" What an idiot I have been ! What a cursed fool ! " and he groaned with rage. " I'll seize every shekel, not a shekel shall they have—no, not if they were starving." After a while, though tired and weary, the old man remounted by his steps and continued his labour, till at length the last one was finished, and drawing himself up to the top, he lay down and sobbed hysterically.

"Surely they have forgotten me ! it is at least two days since I've been here." When he had again recovered himself he went and fetched the lantern, for little light was reflected up the pit. He seemed to remember passing over a plank when he had entered ; if so, why ? And now by the light of the lantern, he, with his foot, carefully tested each inch of the flooring in front of him. Putting down his foot again, holding by the sides, he tried a little further, when suddenly, bang went the spring, and a yawning pit was in front of him ; starting back he clutched the walls. What a merciful escape ! So near !—Thank Heaven, he was of a cautious nature. He then sat down, shaking in every limb from the fright. Now, how to cross ? Then he thought of the lids of the coffins which held the jewels. Descending carefully he returned to the tomb and ripped off a lid.

"Curse them !" he said, as he saw the sacks of jewels, then cutting long strips of sacking from the bags he tied them together, binding one end securely round the coffin lid and fastening the other end round his shoulder he again climbed up the pit, and after firmly tying the end of the strip to the iron bar he pulled up the lid and with it made a firm bridge over the dangerous opening ; with equal caution he felt the entire flooring of the little entrance chamber. Although dropping with fatigue the old man again descended until he had his provisions, oil, and a sack of dried grass up in the top chamber ; then utterly exhausted he lay down to rest.

When he again awoke, what efforts he made to try and force the entrance ! In vain did he use the implements left in the vault. He was utterly powerless to shift the rock. What he suffered day after day as he

grew weaker and weaker from want of drink and food, God alone can tell.

When Benjamin arrived at the entrance, exhausted by his climb up the cliff, for he had set out when he was really too weak for such an undertaking, he hastened to loosen the iron bar and endeavoured to draw back the slab as his father had instructed him. At first it seemed to stick, but Benjamin again tried, exerting all his strength, then it came—but not alone.

“What in heaven’s name is that?” gasped Benjamin, as he started back with a shriek. Then seeing that the ghastly thing did not follow him, he cautiously crept back and saw—What was it? And the stench! There lay the awful thing, the hair dropping off the decomposed body—“Yes,” before him lay all that remained of Isaac, the rich Hebrew, whose body had lurched forward, as the slab, which had supported it, had been removed.

It was a long time before Benjamin could nerve himself to draw out the decomposed body, which was actually dropping to pieces; at last, having done this, he entered the vault, reeking as it was with the putrid stench. By the light of the lantern he saw all the vain efforts Isaac had made to escape; then, grasping some implements, he hastily regained the outside, where he dug a hole in which he buried the remains of the old Hebrew, after which, throwing his spade into the vault, he fastened up the slab, and descended the cliff, by the same circuitous path by which he had arrived, so that the boatman might have no possible clue as to where he had been. Rejoining the man, he returned to Ta-n-terer and, after having sold his boat, he took his passage in the next vessel going to Memphis, where he hoped to meet his mother and all his kinsfolk.

CHAPTER XXIV

PTAHMES DESCRIBES PRINCE SETI'S VISIT TO LUXOR

THE time selected for the private meeting of the Governors and High Priests, was during the festival of Ammon, which would of itself form a reason, without attracting attention, for their presence at Thebes.

When the day arrived the Crown Prince sent me word, that as he intended to leave the palace and cross the Nile a considerable time before the religious ceremony would take place, he wished me to await him at Luxor, whence he would afterwards set out for the Great Temple, hoping thus to avoid much of the crowd and to be able to talk over the purposes of the meeting which was to take place at Luxor later in the day.

Awaiting the arrival of the Prince, I sat in my favourite retreat on the terrace of the temple roof, from which I could watch for the arrival of the royal barges, occupying myself in the meantime by reading the proverbs of Ptah-Hetep,¹ written in the reign of Tet-Ka-Ra,² or Assa, a Pharaoh of the fifth dynasty, who lived two thousand years before I was born ; his words are well worth the reading, as the following will show :—

“ No artist, but should aspire to produce his conceptions in their highest perfection.

“ He who is underhand in his dealings, and agrees

with everyone, in order to please either the great or the lowly, is a detestable person.

" If thou art wise, look after thy house ; love thy wife without alloy ; feed and clothe her well, anoint her and fulfil her desires. It is a kindness which does honour to its possessor.

" If thou art powerful, command only to direct ; to be despotic is to run into evil ; a diplomatic man overcomes most obstacles.

" Teach the man of great position, that by good deeds, he may still add to his honours.

" If thou hast become great, who once wast small ; and rich, after having been poor ; grow not hard of heart, because of thy prosperity ; thou hast only become the steward of the good things of God." ³

I was considering how wise were the words of our forefathers, when the cheers of the populace warned me that the royal barges were approaching. I, therefore, hurried down to the landing place to receive the Prince.

A staging had been placed across the terrace and roadway, which separates the Temple from the embankment ; this was richly carpeted and lined by the guards of Amen to keep back the people on either side.

Prince Seti stepped into the litter awaiting him, which was carried by six captains in front and by six behind, a fan bearer proceeding and another following, while I, holding my symbol of office, walked by the side of the litter. After us came the Lords-in-waiting, and the attendants carrying the Prince's offerings to our Temple.

As the cortège passed, the onlookers bowed according to their rank, some bending their heads to the ground.

The Prince wore over his hair, which fell in curls to the shoulders, a golden diadem from which on the right

side hung the short band of ribbon denoting his royal descent. Gold chains and clasps, inlaid with gems, encircled his neck, his tight-fitting vest of transparent damask was also decorated with gold embroidery and studded with precious stones, and from his waist hung the royal shendot⁴ and the lion's skin and tail, the ends of the girdle being allowed to hang down. Over this dress he wore a long cloak, tight-fitting at the back, and fastened lightly across the chest by a gold buckle; the sleeves were loose showing the gold clasps and bracelets on his arms, and his feet were encased in gold embroidered sandals which turned up at the toes.

The Lords-in-waiting wore panther skins, the head and fore paws hanging down in front, the hind paws tied together with ribbon over the shoulders, their long outer skirts hung in pleats, the under skirts descending as far as the ankles, and their wigs covered their necks according to the custom of our day.

The Temple of Luxor was built by Amenophis III, on the site of a Chapel raised by Thothmes III, and is nearly parallel with the Nile, the long range of buildings slanting in a north-easterly direction, at which end is the entrance; the approach is lined by an avenue of sphinxes, and two lofty obelisks⁵ stand a short distance in front of the gigantic pylon, which forms the entry to the first court. Facing north-east on each side of this gateway, are colossal seated-statues of Rameses II. The entrance on this day was further adorned by flags flying from four lofty staves, one at each end of the façade and on each side of the gateway.

CHAPTER XXV

THE PRINCE'S VIEWS ON THE FUTURE

As soon as Prince Seti had entered the first court of the Temple, which is an open square surrounded by a covered double colonnade built by Rameses II,¹ I ordered the gates to be closed. The Prince then descended from his litter, and having instructed his chamberlain to see that all was prepared in time for his departure to the great Temple of Epet,² he directed me to lead him to the apartments prepared for his use ; these were in an adjunct,³ situated between the main building and the outer wall of the grounds, and overlooked the gardens on either side. After resting here awhile, he decided to ascend the roof of the Temple, thinking it might amuse him to watch the people, and while he gazed on the busy scenes below, he graciously commanded me to be seated.

Most of the inhabitants were hastening to secure a position which would enable them to have a good view of the religious procession ; the ferry boat being unable to carry all the passengers, the river was crowded with boats which continually brought people from the other side ; only those whose business compelled them were crossing to the western bank, such as bull-baiters,⁴ acrobats, jugglers and wrestlers, who were obliged to be in readiness for the afternoon performance at the Hippodrome. Several boatmen were also preparing

for the boat races and water tournaments, which would take place after the ceremonies of the Temple were finished. Musicians and singers were to be seen hurrying to secure good positions on the promenades, so as to be able to gain a recompense from the light-hearted townsmen. The gay disposition of the people was uppermost, the usual business of the city seemed forgotten, and except the refreshment providers, flower-sellers, entertainers and boatmen, everyone seemed bent on enjoying the public holiday.

The scene evidently amused the Prince, and seated as he was facing the north-west, he had a splendid view of the whole City. Watching his face, I saw, however, his happy smile fade, as his eyes left the gay and ever-moving panorama beneath him, and rested on the mountain of Asâs and Mount Kurn, which rise directly beyond the City on the north-western side and enclose the Valley of Tombs ; then, his gaze sought the funeral temples erected by Nebhepet-Ra, the three Thothmes, and Queen Hatshepsowet [Ha'tsrepsu],[•] and afterwards lingered on Ramessium and the Temple of Qurneh [Kurna], and lastly moved towards the colossi of Amenophis III, and the ruins of Amenophium.[•] Thus, being able to read his thoughts, I was not surprised, when he turned to me and said :—

"Here is the city of Life, there," he continued, pointing to the Valley of Tombs, "the abode of the dead ; being so near death, how good is the advice of the poet—' Spend a happy day, bodies are born only to live while the Gods decree . . . Obey thy desires, and seek thy happiness so long as thou remainest on the earth ; wear not thy heart in repining until the day comes when the impassive God hearkens not to those who implore from him a longer period of life. The lamentations of

his friends do not help a man to be consoled in the tombs. Spend a happy day and enjoy it to the utmost, for verily no man carries his possessions with him when he dies ; verily no man who has departed this life has ever returned.' Therefore these people are wise to make merry, for to-morrow we die, and in that day our thoughts perish," saying which the Prince rose and went towards the parapet.

Unfortunately his royal and able mind is not in accord with our religious teaching and many a time have we arguments on the different theological systems and doctrines all of which he treats with indifference.

"*How much more of to-day, I wonder, is to be wasted in useless mummeries ?*" he murmured, more to himself than to me, as he returned to his seat. "It grieves me, Ptahmes," he said turning towards me, "*to see a man of your ability spending so many of your days in these empty ceremonies. What matters it, if a man prays in a palace or the desert ? Then why squander our substance in erecting temples ? Use rather the money in tending to the needs of the aged and feeble.* It is such utter nonsense to pretend it is to the glory of God, when it is simply for the glory of the priesthood, and a means to swell its coffers. *What can God care for the most superb of your temples ? Look at the firmament with its countless millions of planets and stars revolving in perfect order with incredible velocity through endless space, and then consider what is this little world in comparison ? A mere grain of sand in a boundless desert ! And beside this stupendous and incomprehensible creation compare the greatest work of us men, these temples, or the pyramids, surely they seem like little mole-hills raised but to fall ; and yet you priests teach the people that the Great*

Creator of this infinite space in which reigns all order and perfection, even from the movements of the mighty planets to the minute nerves of the tiniest of insects—that this Supreme Being takes notice whether each individual in this petty globe prays to him in such and such words, form, or costume, and that he occupies himself with the everlasting future of each miserable little being ? Nay, Ptahmes, the best of us are little better than insects, which live but a short day and are no more ; we are not asked if we wish to come into existence, but, being born, we laugh, we cry, we die, and so the farce ends. But as to the benefit or pleasure derived by God in seeing us attend your religious ceremonies, it is a pure fallacy. A man may be good, or bad, but no amount of bowing his knees, or singing hymns will make him a better being, and if he thinks such nonsense can please the Almighty, he is a fool. To me it appears pure impudence to render praise to God, the great Spirit is far above deriving pleasure from receiving thanks or praise, and so doing is, to my mind, a sheer waste of time and generally marks the hypocrite, who thus endeavours to delude himself and his fellows as to his real worth, and even if this is not so, his chief object is generally the mere selfish hope of saving his own soul. Surely there is room for a reformer whose standard is ' Truth ' and who would sweep away the priesthood and its temples ; one who would endeavour to stamp out hypocrisy, selfishness and lying, whose watch-word would be ' Help one another ' and yet who would teach his followers to protect themselves against the covetous and evil-doers. Give me one such unselfish being, who is charitable and forgiving and lives to do good to man and beast, who goes without himself to help others and tries to make life pleasant

to his fellows, and you there have a man who is worth fifty thousand of your psalm-singing hypocrites. Why, I have known these knaves to be so devoid of honesty that they would even rob their own brothers and sisters of their birthright and yet kneel down to the Almighty and consider themselves righteous. There is but one judgment for such devils, let them be pointed out with loathing to all mankind and then annihilated ; thus endeavour to stamp the breed out, for there are no more contemptible beings on the face of the earth." Saying which the Prince arose and walked backwards and forwards so impressed was he with the truth of what he was saying.

"Mark you," he continued, "I do not mean an arrogant agitator like Moses, whose chief object is his own aggrandisement, but a truly religious leader, a pure and good being who would teach 'brotherly love,' a term now too often used by the vilest of hypocrites."

"Reformers, great Prince," I replied, "are not as a rule well received ; for instance look at the ruins of Akhet-aten,⁷ see what happened when Amenhotep IV endeavoured to re-establish the Sun-worship, not only was the City razed to the ground at his death, but the dynasty itself shortly afterwards fell."

"And yet," replied Seti, "a better King or husband than Amenhotep IV would be difficult to find ; if it was owing to his religion I cannot say, but if so, the sooner we adore one God instead of so many, the better for the people, though it may not be so profitable for the priesthood."

"That, sire, is not the general opinion, and as to your new theory, a religion which has for its chief object the suppression of the priests, would naturally meet with their opposition."

" You mean that they would get rid of such a teacher, perhaps slay him ? "

" Probably, your Highness."

" Well, your opinion is frankly given and I think you are correct. But supposing the precepts caught the public fancy, what then ? "

" Then, great Prince, it would soon change from its simple and pure form. Among the followers, would be men, who would, on the first opportunity, endeavour to make themselves priests, and live on their brethren,—High Priests and temples would follow, and in a few hundred years, thousands of priests would be living on the people."

" But," said Prince Seti, " that would be in direct opposition to the simple precepts of the doctrine, nor do I see, if ' truth and kindness one to another ' was their only creed, to whom they would raise their temples ? "

" Ah, great Prince, the priesthood would soon find an object, they might raise them ' to the Glory of the Eternal Spirit ' or they would probably after the death of their simple teacher, and be he ever so lowly, worship him as a God who had descended to the earth, and in future ages this would probably be believed."

" Well, even then," said the Prince, " there would not be hundreds of gods as now."

" Ah, Sire, if they made a god of their teacher, they would probably make lesser gods or saints of his leading followers. The time for man's chief wish to do good, one to another is, I fear, far distant. The true religion of to-day is ' self,' and for thousands of years it will yet be ' self.' Mankind for the most part is far too despicable to feel pleasure in helping others, or to do good for the pure love of well doing. If any charity is

given it is chiefly that it may be recorded in bold characters on their tombs, the giver often leaving even those destitute whom he has brought into the world. The whole spirit of the day is of the earth and earthly, and a great Prince like yourself can hardly conceive how low, cunning and cruel is the human race. It even pleases mankind for the most part, to make others feel their power and to take a pleasure in wounding the feelings of those whom they ought to aid. As you implied, there is not, I believe, one truly unselfish man in fifty thousand, and he would probably be so persecuted that the goodness of his nature would soon be spoilt.

"Even if your ideal teacher should ever exist, I fear his doctrine would be shortly so perverted and altered that probably thousands would be sacrificed in his name,⁸ for such is the innate cruelty of mankind, they are but civilized brutes, and few even possess the faithfulness of a dog.

"Religion with them is a matter of form, by which they endeavour to show themselves more worthy than their neighbours, and those who are naturally good are soured and repelled by the utter falseness of these canting hypocrites; as mouldy fruit affects the good, so is it most essential to guard against evil influences and remove all those who may be harmful to our race. And it is on such a subject as this, great Prince, that the nation wants to-day your help and guidance, and I feel that Egypt will not ask in vain."

"You allude, I suppose," said Seti, "to the expulsion of the Israelites?"

"Yes, my lord, your royal father, blinded by his hatred against that dastardly nation, still refuses to allow them to depart, chiefly, I believe, because the desire emanates from the crafty Moses, who saw, that

by placing himself as an agitator at the head of this race of slaves, he might thus become their ruler. This wish to leave the land, though originating from Moses only as a means of self-aggrandisement, is really necessary for the welfare of the Egyptians, who can no longer be preyed on by the usury of the wealthier Hebrews, nor taxed to keep the thousands of poorer Israelites on the public relief works, besides having to support all the lepers at the town of Avaris." *

" I will hear the arguments of your wise men on the subject," replied the Prince, " my one desire is for the ultimate good and welfare of our country, and any impediment to that end must be removed, even should it entail the suppression of Pharaoh himself, and all our royal line," saying which the Prince arose :

" Tell me, Ptahmes, and I ask you as man to man, if you have such a poor opinion of mankind, do you truly believe in our future existence ? "

" Great Prince, no man's belief can guide us. With God all things are possible, and we all cling to this hope ; complete annihilation of self being too awful for the human mind to contemplate ; yet in countries where they do not believe that souls exist in animals, they destroy brute life, although they consider by so doing they completely annihilate an animal's spirit ; in other words they freely inflict on dumb creatures that which they themselves most dread."

" Yet," said Seti, " a simple dog is in many ways endowed by finer spiritual perceptions than a human being. How often will it warn the household of approaching death ! Transmission of thought is now also freely acknowledged by all thinking men, and what is thought but our soul ! "

" My lord," I replied, " mankind at present does not

even understand how to make use of the simplest powers of nature, how then can we be expected to fathom the more subtle secrets of spiritual life ? It is mere arrogance to assert that we alone have everlasting life, for although we are more intellectually developed we are still but mere animals, and what knowledge have we that we may not be pygmies in understanding in comparison with the inhabitants of the millions of worlds which surround us ?

" There is, however, one thing certain, that if animals have no future existence, then those countless thousands who are lower than the brutes, and do evil to man and beast instead of exerting themselves to do good, that they also must perish, for it appears to me that not only is an unselfish nature the great means of happiness, but without this elementary principle no spirit can be fit for a future existence, for it would prey on the universe."

" That is to say, Ptahmes, you believe that a selfish, lying, or cruel spirit is annihilated, that only the good among us survive ? "

" Yes, my lord, brain power, or the cunning of the crocodile may enable a man to seize on the goods of this world, but without a spirit purges itself of its lowest propensities and becomes gentle, truthful, forgiving and unselfish, I feel it would be unfitted for a higher existence."

" And yet," continued the Prince, " you teach the doctrine of a future life to all men."

" Sire, in order that they may cleanse themselves of their selfishness, and endeavour to fit themselves to be nobler beings, by so doing even if there is no future life, they have lost nothing, but gained, for they thus may perhaps begin to feel the happiness of doing

kindness to others, without which they miss the sweetest blessing in the world. Others there are who, if they did not partly believe in future reward or punishment, would break loose in anarchy. In all the thousands who are in the City beneath us, there are I doubt, not more than one or two, who would do the smallest kindness, without the belief of future reward, or the hope that it would be advertised among their acquaintances."

"The pure-hearted, who go without what they most desire, in order to help others, are indeed rare beings, yet without this quality it seems to me impossible that any are fitted for a future existence."

"I am glad, Ptahmes, to hear your private theories, for there is not a man who has any intellect, but must gravely consider these questions at some period of his existence."

As he was thus speaking the chamberlain appeared, and on a sign from the Prince he approached and announced that all was now ready for his Highness's departure.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE FESTIVAL OF AMMON-RA

PRINCE SETI, carried in his litter and accompanied by his suite, proceeded by the private road which runs direct in a north-eastern line from Luxor to the Great Temple of Ammon-Ra ; the entire route, which is within the sacred precincts, is bordered by an avenue of sphinxes, and passes close by the sanctuary of Khons, at which place the Prince was received by Roma, second Prophet of Ammon, " Chief of the Secrets of Heaven," and High Priest and Governor of our renowned Temple and sacred College of Anu,¹ to whom, in compliment to his position and age, besides being the son of Roi, I had asked to preside over the religious festival ; I undertaking to superintend the arrangements for the meeting to be held at Luxor later in the day.

Roi, the first Prophet, who besides being " Sem of Ptah " at Memphis, holds the position of " Chief Architect to Pharaoh " and " Commander of the sacred guard of Amen," had sent by his son Roma to the Crown Prince, stating that, unfortunately, he was too infirm to travel. At the same time, by a courier, he sent a despatch commanding me instantly to dismiss the officer of the guard who had dared personally to search the daughter of Isaac, a Hebrew, contrary to the rules of the priesthood ; I was also informed that the position of High Priest of Abydos, just rendered vacant by

death, had been bestowed on Merenatf, chief reciter of our Temple. This appointment surprised me, for although Merenatf is a good man, I could in no way account for his being given such an important post in preference to so many older and more able men.

As soon as the religious ceremony in the sanctuary was finished, the procession formed within the sacred precincts of the Temple enclosures, and then preceded by a company of mounted officers of the guard of Amen, issued by the western gate into the public roadway to make the tour of the eastern city.

First came the prophet Roma, in his official costume, and wearing over his chest and left shoulder his insignia of the leopard's skin adorned with golden stars, he walked immediately in front of the sacred barque, the prow and stern of which was surmounted by a ram's head and sacred collar. In the centre of the boat rested the holy shrine ; this miniature vessel was carried by means of long staves passing through metal rings, and thus supported on the shoulders of twenty-four priests.⁸ At the side of the shrine walked two High Priests wearing panther skins on their left side, and dressed in their full official costumes. After the sacred boat came musicians and vocalists, their well-trained voices singing, to the soft accompaniment of the harps, hymns in praise of Ammon-Ra. A group of priests followed, carrying the hour-glass, the palm, and various symbols of astrology. After these walked the sacred scribes in long flowing garments, wearing plumes on their heads.

Next, preceded by Unnerfer, High Priest of the Temple of the Divine Goddess "Mut," and Nefertari, gemat of Amen, came a group of noble ladies carrying lilies and playing the sistrum ; they preceded the holy

shrine of "Mut," the holy Mother, "The Queen of Heaven." This ark was also carried on staves and escorted by the chief priests and priestesses dedicated to the service of that goddess.

Singers, musicians and groups of priests followed accompanying the sacred shrine of Khonsu, "The Holy son of Ammon and Mut," who with them form "The Blessed triad" of Thebes." Before this ark walked Amenemau, the High Priest of this God, followed by Hor, the divine father, the chief reciter and the leading priests of the great temple, attended by a full choir and a large band of temple musicians.

After these came the cortège of the Crown Prince ; in front walked several princely priests and nobles bearing ornamental fans and insignias of their rank, and a sacred scribe reading religious precepts from a papyrus roll. Two priests carrying burning incense immediately preceded the canopied litter of the Prince, which was borne by eighteen officers of the royal guard, and accompanied by High Priests and fan bearers. Prince Seti was seated on a royal throne, behind which were two figures with outstretched wings representing Truth and Justice ; at each side of the throne was carved a lion, and a sphinx having in front of it a hawk.

A group of priests followed, then the royal suite, and a full military band. The rest of the procession was composed of priests carrying various symbols, among these were two golden dogs, representing the Hemispheres ; the hawk, denoting the sun ; and the ibis, the moon ; making the mystic four ; also a High Priest carrying the sacred emblem of the water-bottle ; others bearing loaves of bread and various religious insignia ; the gilded ox representing Apis, the ape as symbol of "Troth," the emblems of Hathor from western Thebes,

and of the gods of the various Nomes⁴ accompanied by the Governors and High Priests of each particular district. After these representatives from all parts of Egypt had passed, came another military band and a company of mounted guards, who closed the procession.

The whole route was lined with cavalry and foot soldiers standing within a spear's length of each other, so that the populace might have every opportunity of comfortably witnessing the sacred ceremony. All bowed and some cast themselves to the ground, as the holy shrines passed, for our countrymen are most devout, in spite of their gay and impetuous disposition ; loud cheers also greeted Prince Seti, who is exceedingly popular.

The procession, after travelling through the principal streets, proceeded by boats to the temple of Luxor, where the sacred barques remained until after the heat of the sun had abated ; when with much ceremony they were conveyed back to Karnac, where the Prince most graciously stayed to dine with the priesthood ; as High Priest of the Great Temple and Piromis of the City, I was obliged to assist.

After witnessing the processions, the townsfolk devoted the rest of the day to their amusements.

In the evening the Prince returned to Luxor, resting in the gardens at the back of the sanctuary until it was time for the Governors and High Priests to assemble for the meeting.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE SECRET MEETING AT LUXOR

I ARRANGED that the meeting at the palace of Luxor should take place in the great covered colonnade which unites the first and the second courts ; which was completed by Tut-enkh-Amun, this is about one hundred and eighty feet long and sixty feet broad ; the walls are superbly decorated¹ and the roof supported on each side by seven fluted columns of over eighty feet in height, which give a grandeur to this magnificent structure which is only equalled by the halls of the great Temple of Amen.

At the north-eastern entrance of this colonnade leading from the first court, is the colossal pylon which served as the original entry to the temple as completed by Amenophis III, and on the opposite end of this colonnade are steps ascending to the second square open court, which is also surrounded by a covered double colonnade. The doorway on the southern side of this court, leads into the hypostyle hall of the temple, behind which is the sanctuary and its numerous courts and chambers.

I selected the colonnade for the assembly in preference to either of the hypostyle halls, as the various courts around the sanctuary render it difficult to insure privacy.

I took the precaution of myself superintending the inspection of the temple roof, so that there might be no

chance of our discussions being overheard, and also saw that no one was allowed in the courts leading to the colonnade.

When all the High Priests and Governors had taken their seats, which were placed so as to leave a broad space in the centre from end to end of the colonnade, the oath of secrecy was taken by all present, after which the Crown Prince, attended by the prophet Roma, entered and took his seat, which was placed in the centre of the dias erected at the south-western end. At his right on a lower step, sat the venerable Beken-Khonsu,³ the great architect and counsellor of Rameses II, formerly head of the priesthood, and one of the chief dignitaries during that monarch's reign. This aged celebrity was now nearly a hundred, and yet lived another score of years. On the Prince's left sat Roma and on a lower step were Iairi, High Priest of Memphis, representative of Roi, and myself. Having all made our obeisance to the Prince on his entry, I offered a short prayer that the Divine Spirit might enlighten our understanding and bless us with his ever-seeing wisdom in guiding our counsels.

After this, the learned prophet Roma arose and explained to the assembly the important question they had been called together to decide.

"The Gods," he continued, "undoubtedly give us opportunities of avoiding evil, but if we see rank weeds growing and multiplying in our land, it is left to us to pluck them out or suffer in consequence. The evil weed I here allude to, which thrives in our midst, is the Israelitish race; from all parts of our country murmurs arise that they are permitted to sojourn so long in the land; though a people barren of any brave or warlike spirit, and only fit to be slaves to such a

nation as ours, yet are they gifted with so much cunning, that, like the wild vine which completely saps the nourishment from the tree which supports it, they are utterly undermining the power of our country. Living on little, they put out their savings at usury, and from their mean and dirty habits, have developed to such a fearful extent the dread disease of leprosy, that we have had, as you know, to send them by thousands to the settlement at Avaris³ where 80,000 live at our expense. The poor of this nation have to be supported by the public relief works, and so numerous has the race now become, that no less than six hundred thousand men, without counting women and children, are preying on our land and eating up our substance, and now buoyed up by their crafty kinsman and agitator, Moses, they refuse to return to their tasks and demand to quit the country.

"Our brother Ptahmes has just returned from interviewing the Governors and High Priests of both Upper and Lower Egypt, several of whom are here present, and there is but one voice and one opinion on the matter.

"Our countrymen hail their departure with delight ; in fact they murmur exceedingly at the King delaying so long in granting them this permission, and should this opposition of Pharaoh continue, it is for us to determine here to-day what course is to be pursued, for ere long the weeds will choke us, and we shall no longer be able to root them out of our land."

When Roma had resumed his seat, Anhurmes, High Priest of Anhur, arose and thus addressed the meeting :—

"Although our learned prophet has shown us many cogent reasons why every endeavour should be made to free ourselves of this burden, he has not mentioned

that, which to my mind is the most important. As we all know, our great rulers have allowed these foreigners entire religious freedom: in fact, there is not a country in the world where they would have received such privileges ;—and how, pray, have they shown their gratitude ? By trying to undermine our glorious religion and by perverting the faithful from the right way.

" Among the Hebrews, in each household, the head of the family acts as priest and every member is expected to make at least two or three converts a year. Now what is the reason of this religious ardour ? Is it that they are so convinced of the truth of their doctrine that they wish all mankind to participate in what they consider their religious blessings ? If this were so, one might even make an excuse for their mistaken zeal ; but no, it is as you will see, but for the sake of sordid gain. For some time past every member of their faith has had to give the tenth of their income for the benefit of the general fund. In other words a tenth of the earnings of all these converts goes to help support a foreign community. When one considers that these foreigners number over six hundred thousand without counting the women and children, and say that only one hundred thousand of these succeed in each persuading but one poor soul in the year to forsake the true gods, you can calculate what a terrible drain this is on the country in the course of a few years ; and we have also to consider that the numbers who are thus perverted from the right way, cease to bring offerings to our temples, and although this may be of little consequence to richly endowed sanctuaries like those of Thebes, yet it is of vital importance to some of our less favoured temples in the provinces.

" Year after year this loss has increased, and the time I feel has now come when this can no longer be borne : in fact, it is our duty as priests not only to save the people from being thus led away from the true faith, but also to prevent this loss which the sanctuaries of our gods have to sustain."

It was with a certain amount of hesitation that I then arose, and commenced to acquaint the meeting with the terrible discovery at the Valley of Tombs, saying :

" Everyone here present, will, I believe, agree with me, that our most revered earthly possessions should be the bodies of our ancestors ; believing as we do, that by their preservation we insure their resurrection.

" If our souls, when purged from sin, are allowed by the Gods to return to the earth that we may arise in a more glorified form, then the destruction of our earthly frame leaves the wandering spirit without an abode, and thus our hope of resurrection is well nigh blasted. How awful then is the sacrilege of desecrating the tomb !

" This risk of annihilation would be a source of dread even to the most brutal and callous of our race ! How much more terrible does it appear when this fate is destined for the greatest and most noble in the land !

" You look in amazement, wondering to what I allude. Alas ! it is my duty to inform you, that not only have the tombs of our ancestors been pillaged, but that in spite of the sentries stationed on the hills, and the precautions taken by the superintendent of the Necropolis, that even the ' Tombs of the Kings ' have been entered, and their sacred bodies stripped of their jewels. ' And by whom ? '—you will doubtless ask. The malefactors, I regret to say, have not yet been

discovered, but some of these sanctified jewels have already been traced to be in possession of the Hebrews.

"When these foreigners whom we harbour and support, are not content with preying on the living, but commence to violate our most sacred instincts by robbing our dead, then I say, our cup is full, and the time has come for us to demand their expulsion."

When I had finished, other priests and governors gave examples of the harshness and injustice of many of the Hebrew moneylenders. After hearing several speakers who echoed the feelings of the Egyptian public on the question, I arose saying :—

"I think we have heard enough to enable us to form a decision without hesitation."

There was a murmur of assent throughout the whole assembly.

I then addressed the Crown Prince and enquired :—

"What if Pharaoh, our royal Father, great Prince, will not hearken unto the voice of his children and refuses to rid us of this curse ? "

To this, Prince Seti replied :—

"Although the King may still cling to the former custom of treating this people as slaves, yet their increasing number and audacity, now that they are led by such a crafty and ambitious man as Moses, makes them a real menace to the Empire. Understanding this, I hope, Pharaoh, our royal father, will decide to allow them to quit the country. If on the other hand, the great King being angry at the lie by which Moses is trying to bring about their departure, remains obdurate, am I to understand that it is your wish that I and the chief ministers, are to take any measures which may be thought necessary to procure the expulsion of these strangers ? Remember in so doing, you represent

the voice of the nation, for coming from all parts of the Empire, and knowing the wishes of the people, you must be able to judge of the requirements of your own districts. Moreover, you must not forget, in carrying out your decisions, we risk instant death, and there are many around Pharaoh who would be only too glad to avail themselves of such an opportunity. Your reply, therefore, needs weighty consideration, jeopardising, as it does, the lives of some of the most learned and enlightened men in this country. For myself, however repugnant it is to act in opposition to my royal Father, it is obvious to me, that in a great question like this, the needs of the country should come first. As for my own life, I do not wish it to be considered, for it is more to be envied to die in the service of one's country, than to live in uselessness to old age. And I hope that this is the opinion of all who are here assembled."

The Crown Prince then resumed his seat, while the assembly broke up to consider the question. There seemingly was but one opinion on the matter, yet for custom's sake, it was put to the vote, and passed unanimously.

Thus ended the secret meeting in the Temple of Luxor, at which the decision of the High Priests and Governors was made.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE PRINCE'S DEPARTURE FROM THEBES

ABOUT a week after the festival, Prince Seti arranged to leave Thebes for Memphis. On the day of his departure, in order to take his last instructions, I crossed the Nile early, and proceeded by chariot to the palace ; the roadway I found already crowded, for a public holiday having been proclaimed, many wished to take advantage of the opportunity of bidding a farewell to their popular prince, as he passed on his way to the Nile.

On my arrival at the palace,¹ the great hall was already filled with the principal citizens, who had assembled to take leave of the Crown Prince, a central passage had, however, been kept by a line of guards, so that I had no difficulty in passing to the audience chamber, where I was at once received.

His Royal Highness commanded me to make known his thanks to the citizens of Thebes, for the quiet and order which had been maintained during his stay, and, moreover, gave me a handsome sum for distribution among the poor and needy of the city. No allusion was made to the secret meeting at Luxor, nor to the pillage of the royal tombs, and remembering his command regarding Isaac, I was careful to make no reference to either.

The Prince, after receiving the Masters of the different guilds, passed down the great hall and entered the royal chariot, which was followed by the court equipages, in which were the suite, the principal officers and myself ; several detachments from the cavalry regiments stationed at Thebes accompanying the cortège, which proceeded direct to the quay, where the royal vessel was waiting ready to sail. The Prince took his position under the canopy on the poop, where, surrounded by his suite, he was in full view of the populace, who gave such hearty cheers, that the music of the military bands was rendered perfectly inaudible.

On the command being given, the gorgeous sails were unfurled, and a hundred oars from amid-deck flashed in the sunlight, working with mathematical precision as the vessel moved swiftly towards the middle of the stream, its sides shining as if made of burnished gold, and its interior being decorated in an equally lavish manner, it looked more like the barque of a sun-god, than that of an earthly prince, the shouts of the citizens continued as the vessel passed in front of them down the Nile, the cheers growing more and more indistinct as it sailed out of our sight.

Having heard that the captain of the vessel chartered by Isaac was now at Thebes, I visited him before returning to the Temple, but I could obtain no further information than that which I already knew from the Temple spy, who had been shipped aboard as one of the crew, namely, that all Isaac's followers had deserted the ship on the appearance of the black plague ; thus I lost all trace of the Hebrew through whom, had not the Prince interfered, I should have probably regained possession of all the priceless jewels stolen from the tombs, representing a value sufficient to raise a temple

to the gods, which might have been a glory to our epoch.

A few days after, without shouts or cheers, I left by a quick sailing vessel for Zan [Tanis], a distance of four hundred and thirty miles, yet so numerous are the places of interest on our noble river, that the journey never seems to me either monotonous or fatiguing.

I stayed a few hours at Qebti,² Ta-n-Terer and Ab-tu, visited the ruined city of Akhet-Aten,³ stayed at Khemnu⁴ and Men-nefer and paid a short visit to the Prophet Roma at the holy Temple at Anu⁵; at Het-ta-her-ab [Athribis] we left the sacred river and proceeded by canal to Perbast⁶ and thence to Zan [Tanis] where Pharaoh was staying; on arriving at that city, I drove direct to the temple, where my son Rames, who is High Priest, had requested me to sojourn during my visit to our Sovereign.

I intended, after learning from my son what fresh mischief had been caused by Moses and Aaron during my absence, to inspect the land of Goshen before rendering my report to Pharaoh.

It was during the evening after my arrival, while resting on the temple terrace, where we could enjoy the cool breeze from the beautiful harbour, in which were vessels from all parts of the world, that my son began to discuss the probable issue which would follow this great assemblage of Hebrews.

"It is my opinion," said Rames, "that there will be no revolt, for although there are over six hundred thousand men collected together, yet they are totally ignorant of the art of war and are, moreover, of a cowardly disposition.

"It is evident that the chief object of Moses⁷ in agitating the people, has been to gain the leadership and

control of the nation, for his whole career shows that it is only through craft and cunning that he has gained success."

This seemed undoubtedly true, when I considered the chief facts of his life.—Even shortly after birth his very existence was only saved through a lie ; for when Pharaoh commanded that all the male children of the Israelites should be destroyed at birth, in order to stop the appalling increase of this dastardly race, the sister of Moses had wit enough by deception to gain the protection of the King's daughter, and her infant brother was in consequence brought up in the royal palace under the name of Mo-uses, from "Mo"—"water" and "Uses"—"such as are saved from drowning." Growing to be an intelligent lad he was sent to the sacred college of "Anu,"⁸ where, under the name of Osaesiph, he was educated and admitted to the sacred calling, as a priest of Osiris,⁹ remaining with us till he had mastered all the higher knowledge and mysteries of our faith, which are only made known to the initiated. He then petitioned Pharaoh to allow him to enter the army, and eventually he was given the command of an expedition against the King of Ethiopia, in which he showed much sagacity ; the line of march being through a territory infested with serpents, he ordered an immense number of ibis to be taken with the advance guard and so ably were these birds used in destroying the snakes, that the army obtained a perfectly safe passage.¹⁰

Arriving at Saba, the capital of Ethiopia, which is situated on a well-fortified island, between the rivers of Astapus and Astaboras,¹¹ and finding he could not storm it, he surreptitiously entered into correspondence with Tharbis, the King's daughter, promising to marry

her should she betray her father,¹² and by means of this treacherous woman, he was enabled to enter and conquer the city. This being the only time he had seen any service, it may be said that he was entirely devoid of experience as a general, and it was therefore probable that he would endeavour to obtain his end by some scheme or conspiracy.

In order to gain authentic knowledge of their wishes from the general mass of the Israelites at Goshen, I determined to visit the land personally; to do this effectually I disguised myself as a travelling merchant; for had I dressed as a priest, I might have been as badly received as if I had appeared as a beggar, though in the latter case, I should probably have been chased from their doors and handed over to the officers for the public relief works. For who knew a Hebrew give help to a destitute stranger?

I had not visited many dwellings before I was certain that the plea of simply going into the wilderness for the purpose of holding a religious festival for a few days, was an absolute farce; their real intention was to make use of this lie as a means to quit the country. Moses being confident, from his knowledge of the territory, that if they could once succeed in gaining the mountains, they would, in those rocky recesses, be enabled to defy all pursuers. Had they meant to return in a few days, they would hardly have tried to sell, for a trifle, everything in their houses, for even heirlooms were offered if at all cumbersome.

I found every available dwelling occupied, and as many of the poorer brethren, who could, had obtained employment on the national relief works, meaning, if possible, even to the last, to make the Egyptians pay for their support. These men I found working by

thousands dredging and deepening the great canal, constructed by Seti I, which joins the Nile from Bubastis with the Red Sea north-west of Pi-Keheret.¹³ Even those Hebrews whose lives had been for the most part passed in this work seemed cheerful and hopeful, perhaps they imagined any change must be preferable to the labour imposed upon them by the task-masters. Moses had so buoyed up all classes of his nation with such brilliant descriptions of the land of Canaan, which district was, I found, to be their destination, that the perils of the journey were overlooked, nor were the people told of the sufferings they would probably have to endure from privation and exposure ; yet, they should have doubted a man who, instead of acting in an open straightforward manner, was seeking to obtain even the permission for them to leave the country by a deception of the worst kind. For was he not trying to work on Pharaoh's feelings by a lie, by endeavouring to gain his sympathy for their religion, as an excuse for their departure ? It was, I believe, because the King knew, or suspected this, that was the chief cause of his obstinacy.

Another sign that the Hebrews did not mean to return, was that although the country looked as fertile and prosperous as usual owing to the perfect system of irrigation enforced by the Government, yet a careful examination showed that only quick-growing crops were being cultivated, such as might serve for immediate use, or for their cattle ; and that no preparations were being made for the coming year.

In the cities of Per-tum¹⁴ and Rameses the same sign of an early departure might be observed amongst all the Hebrews, proving that it was not only a section but the whole nation, which had determined to quit the country.

CHAPTER XXIX

PHARAOH GIVES AN AUDIENCE TO MOSES AND AARON

HAVING returned to Tanis, I made my report to Pharaoh, and exposed the duplicity of Moses, in asserting that the proposed journey into the wilderness was simply to hold a religious festival for three days ; yet I urged, that the Israelites' departure, was not only necessary for the welfare of the Empire, but serious consequences might arise, if he compelled them to remain.

Pharaoh being again supplicated by Moses and Aaron to allow the Hebrews to depart, commanded these leaders to appear before him at the Palace, ordering the principal nobles and chief magicians to attend at the same time.

On the appointed day, I and my fellow priests, after passing the guards at the outer gate, entered the colonnaded courtyard of the palace ; even accustomed as I am to the magnificent buildings of Net and Mennefer,¹ yet am I always impressed by the beauty of this, the last palace erected by Rameses the Great. Between each of the gigantic columns of nearly one hundred feet in height, which surround the quadrangle of the outer court, stand colossal statues, and on each side of the principal doorway leading into the palace is an enormous seated figure of Rameses II ; the whole of the palace interior has been built on the same grand

and artistic lines, the walls and ceilings being richly ornamented with historical and religious pictures, and the capitals and friezes finished with a remarkably beautiful design of lotus flowers intermingled with palm leaves.

Until the King was ready to receive us, we waited in a lofty ante-chamber adjoining the principal corridor, along which we could hear the hurrying to and fro of the nobles and court dignitaries who had been ordered to attend.

We had only been a short time in the palace, when there was a suppressed noise from the multitude gathered outside the palace gates, and the commotion soon spread itself into the palace, where even the guards began to murmur.

Wishing to ascertain the reason of this excitement, I re-entered the corridor and found the disturbance was caused by the arrival of Moses and Aaron, whose tall athletic figures I saw proceeding along the passage kept open by the guards, while on either side the nobles and others continued to jeer at them as they passed on their way to the judgment hall. A few minutes after the arrival of these Hebrews we were summoned to attend the King whom we found already in the throne-room.

Falling down before him, I awaited his commands. "Arise, Ptahmes," said Pharaoh in a weary tone. "You and your priests must help us to deal with this Moses, who, brought up in our Court and treated as one of noble blood, now, as might be expected from one of his race, recompenses us by stirring up his slavish nation to revolt against his benefactors."

"Great King," I replied, "these people are utterly despicable and without honour or valour, their cunning

alone has to be feared, if you, in your goodness, are against slaying Moses and Aaron, but inclined to listen to their grievances, it is only for us to see that you are not deceived."

Then taking his seat on the alabaster throne, Pharaoh commanded that the end of the throne-room be drawn back, which then appeared simply as a raised alcove or recess at the end of the great Hall, which filled with nobles, the court dignitaries in their robes of office, and the gorgeously-arrayed bodyguard, made an imposing spectacle. All arose in the presence of Pharaoh and thrice prostrated themselves to the ground.

Then the court chamberlain stepping forward said in a loud and reverential tone :—

"Great King, Lord of the Upper and Lower Nile, blessed of Osiris and Representative of Great Ammon-Ra ; it having pleased you to hear the grievances of your servants the Israelites, Moses and Aaron, their leaders, attend the Court awaiting your permission to speak."

On a motion from Pharaoh, I said :—

"Let them speak."

Moses and Aaron then cast themselves at the foot of the marble steps leading to the throne-room, after which, having risen, the former said :—

"Great King ! The last time we, your servants, pleaded for permission to be given to our people to journey three days into the wilderness to sacrifice to our God, you not only refused our request, but doubled the work of my brethren, by refusing henceforth to supply them with the straw with which to make their bricks. Now, therefore, has Jehovah, the Lord God of our Fathers, sent a sign to you, whereby you may know that He hath sent me, and to declare to you that

grievous shall be the pestilences throughout the land, if the prayers of his people are refused."

Aaron then took his rod and threw it on the ground at the foot of the steps, and, behold, it became a serpent, seeing which, Pharaoh became afraid, and clutching me by the arm said :—

" Surely, Ptahmes, this is the work of God ? "

" Will the King allow his servant to confront this man ? "

" Do as you desire," Pharaoh answered.

Then I commanded the priests to follow me, and passing down the steps, in front of Pharaoh's throne, leading down to the Judgment Hall, I thus addressed Moses :—

" Is it by tricks such as these that you approach the Great King and try to influence his decisions ? Did not you even learn this from me who according to the commands of my Lord's forefather taught you all the mysteries known to the Egyptian priesthood ; " then having only our small staves² of office in our hands, I ordered my priests to cast them down as I did, and behold, straightway every rod was turned into a serpent.

Then Moses, turning to the snake which he had held as a rod, he commanded it to swallow our smaller ones, and it did so, seeing which I said :—

" We came not prepared for this, our staves are small, but, behold, I will do a greater thing."

Then turning towards Pharaoh and afterwards to the people, I said :—

" Hearken ! I will cause a star of extraordinary brilliancy to ascend in this hall and when you see it float, you will find that I and the priests have passed away and shall no more be seen till the star turns red " ; Then I caused a ball of fire to rise into the air, and as

it mounted it spread such a brilliant light throughout the hall, that all who looked thereon were dazed, and I and my fellow priests were invisible to Pharaoh and all present, excepting to Moses who, turning away his head from the star, still beheld us. Then I perceived he knew and understood how these delusions were produced.

Then I cried out aloud, "Turn red," and the star immediately became bright crimson, and all present could again see us. Then I commanded that it should change into other colours, and after this to divide and float away, and it was so.

And Moses laughing said :—

"Behold you were there all the time."

Whereupon one of the multitude shouted :—

"Liar! We were here and know that he and the priests disappeared," and others added, "And we saw them re-appear."

Then Pharaoh commanded silence and telling me his decision, I thus addressed Moses :—

"Behold, because of your lies and tricks the King refuses to listen to your requests; your people, moreover, are greatly behind with their work, and are deeply indebted to the state for sustenance. The audience is ended."

Hearing which Moses turning round towards the throne in a loud voice replied :—

"Then thus saith the Lord of Hosts, even through me His servant—'If you will not let My people go, then famine and pestilence shall visit the land, and evil shall fall on Pharaoh and his people.'"

But the King remained stubborn and still refused, then ordering the sides of the throne-room to be closed he returned to his apartments moody and ill-tempered.

On the morrow the King commanded that we should all make preparation to depart shortly for Memphis, that he might be nearer to the sacred Temple of On, where he could consult the wishes of the Gods through the medium of the stars, for he had commenced to be inwardly afraid of supernatural agencies. This decision I immediately made known by carrier pigeons to the Crown Prince, so that he might make whatever arrangements he should think necessary, for I knew that Prince Amen-meses had been trying to raise enmity between the King and Prince Seti.

CHAPTER XXX

THE NEW SECRETARY

PRINCE SETI, on arriving at Memphis, had taken up his quarters in the palace, and had ordered every kind of amusement to be provided for his recreation, in order to prevent his mind from dwelling on the troubles, which he felt would be the result of his father's obstinacy, in connection with the Israelitish question.

One morning, while the Prince, seated in his apartments, was thinking over the perplexities of the situation, after reading over the reports which he had just received from Ptahmes, who, as previously stated, was with the Court at Tanis, an attendant entered the apartment, and announced that the new secretary, who was expected, had arrived, and awaited his commands ; the Prince, feeling too worried to see anyone, at first replied :—

“ Tell Anna to take the youth to his apartments, and there let him rest and be served with refreshments,”—then reflecting, that it might be as well to acquaint Roi, the first prophet, how he intended to act in consequence of the news from the north, he added :—

“ Stay, ask him to enter.”

Eli, the new secretary, employed through the interest of Rachel, was apparently some twenty years of age, and though of somewhat slender build, was good-looking and appeared intelligent. A surprised look flashed over the lad’s face as he entered the presence

chamber, then making a deep obeisance he respectfully awaited the Prince's pleasure :—

“ You have a letter for me, is it not so ? ”

“ Yes, Great Prince, it is a letter from Lord Horus, which was to be presented to you personally as a proof of my identity.”

“ Good,” said the Prince after looking through the scroll :—

“ When you have had refreshment and changed your attire, you will find a chariot in waiting to convey you to the temple ; on your arrival you are to ask for Roi, the first prophet, acquainting him that you are the bearer of a letter from the Crown Prince, which you are ordered to deliver to him personally. You fully understand ? ” added the Prince, giving a sealed tablet into Eli’s hand. “ See that you faithfully execute these, my first commands.”

Eli then retired ; never before had he been the inmate of a palace, and as he retraced his steps over the thick eastern carpets, he marvelled at the luxury with which every detail of the colossal palace was decorated.

After having been served with a dainty repast in the rooms set apart for his use, he changed his garments for the Court costume which he had had prepared, and then, summoning an attendant, requested that he might be conducted to the chariot. Running footmen, carrying staves to clear the way, preceded the royal equipage, and as it passed through the crowded streets Eli felt amused at the novelty of his position.

The temple of Ptah, which is situated on the south side of the City is built of granite and alabaster¹ and designed in the usual manner of Egyptian temples, namely, the first and second colonnaded courts, the hypostyle hall, behind which stands the sanctuary and

its dependences ; its length is from north to south,² its chief axis from east to west ; and within the temple enclosures, and connected with the sacred building are the apartments for the priesthood, the superintendents of the separate departments, those of the sacred scribes, the temple attendants, and the lodgings for a detachment of the sacred legion of Amen ; in another section stand the schools of sculpture, the store houses and dwellings of those connected with the works under control of the priesthood ; in fact, the temple is surrounded by a town enclosed within the sacred precincts, and inhabited entirely by those supported by the works connected with the sanctuary.

Eli, as he passed through the magnificent courts, was reminded of the great temple at Thebes, which it almost rivalled, but, what most impressed him here, was the colossal granite statue of Rameses II, at the southern gate, which equalled in dignity that at Ramessium³ ; he, also, while waiting for his answer, was shown the far-famed granite and sandstone chambers on the eastern side of the sacred lake, and the holy bull—“ Apis.”

When the reply of the aged prophet was ready, the lad was driven straight back to the palace, where, after delivering his missive, he attended on the chamberlain to receive instructions regarding his daily duties.

Day by day, Prince Seti found the youth of more and more use, and soon entrusted him with his chief correspondence ; and, moreover, arranged that he should accompany him on a visit he proposed to make to a kinsman of Ptahmes, named Bai, whose mansion was situated near Tep-ah on the Nile, about forty miles distant from Memphis.

CHAPTER XXXI

PRINCE SETI'S INTERVIEW WITH THE QUEEN

STAYING at the palace at the same time as Prince Seti, was Queen Tua, the youthful wife of Pharaoh,¹ who passed much of her time in the secluded parts of the palace gardens, where, in the cool of the shaded arbors, and underneath the waving palms, she could escape the heat of the burning sun.

Lovely flowers, fountains sparkling in the sunlight, the songs of birds in the aviaries, all helped to make this retreat appear a place for peace and happiness, and represent an earthly paradise ; yet to Tua, all these things were but nothing, and she considered herself one of the most miserable women in the world, for she, the daughter of Maurmey,² the vanquished King of Libya, lacked that which most women prize beyond all things, namely Love ; she loved and it was not returned ; brought up in luxury of the Libyan court, where her slightest wish had been gratified, she could ill brook the selfish and uneven temper of Pharaoh, and loathed the enforced companionship of her uncongenial husband ; moreover, she unfortunately loved with all the impetuous passion of the East, her husband's son, Seti, who unattracted by her most winning smiles, appeared utterly unconscious of her attachment. Surely she thought this must be a pretence, how could he fail to feel how she cared for him ? Had Pharaoh after the

victory but left her with Prince Seti, how different her life might have been ! How relieved had she been, when she, as a royal captive, had been taken into the Crown Prince's tent, and he had given her a kiss of welcome. Then, how her spirits fell when Pharaoh,⁸ on the return of the army to Memphis, seeing her loveliness, had claimed her as his own ; surely the half-blind King might have been content with his scores of wives and favourites, and have left her with his handsome son.

Now, when she heard that Prince Seti had returned to Memphis, and at the present time was in the palace, her passion burst out afresh, and being the more inflamed by her hopelessness, her baffled love seemed to consume her whole being.

At last, she believed she had found out through one of her maids, the cause of his callousness, for she heard that the Crown Prince, while at Thebes, had been in the habit of secretly receiving the daughter of a Hebrew, and had spent much of his time in her company. How long this had continued, she was unable to ascertain.

" So he prefers the offspring of an accursed Israelite to the daughter of a King ! The witch has, I suppose, so fascinated him with her wiles, that he has become entangled."

" Is she more beautiful than I ? " she asked of her maid, as she lay back with a sigh on a luxuriant couch in one of the arbors.

" No woman bearing the Israelitish caste of face, oh Queen, can to my mind be otherwise than repulsive ; then again, owing to the form of their nostrils, all have that peculiar nasal drawl, which makes even the sound of their speech obnoxious."

" Enough," said the Queen, " someone is approaching."

Up the broad walk of the palace garden, seemingly in deep thought, strolled Prince Seti.

"Go to the Crown Prince, and say the Queen wishes to speak to him, and see that we are not disturbed."

"Seti," she said as the Prince approached,— "I wished to speak to you privately, for I have heard that which, if it came to the knowledge of the King, would seriously injure you in his favour."

"Indeed ! and what, oh Queen, might that be ?"

"It is rumoured that you not only favour the growing disturbances caused by the Israelites, but actually freely associate with these foreigners. Think how the example of a Prince of the reigning house will be judged even by the people ! Oh, Seti, you who have so many to love you, why seek companionship among that cursed and leprous race of slaves ? Here among us, surely there are so many who would gladly sacrifice their lives to amuse you, those who are of the same rank and who must have the same aims for the advancement of the country as you have, and if you want the companionship of a woman, one whose whole being could study your interests, why am not I, the Queen, your nearest and dearest friend ? Come, Seti, let me share your hopes and fears ; I who have also such need of a guide and comrade. Such a union, of how much value could it be to us both ? I who in the freshness of my youth am tied to a man old enough to be my grandfather, and who is not above neglecting me to pass his time with any female slave, who may please his passing fancy. You, Seti, know, or can easily imagine, how a drunken, selfish man, endowed at his best with none too many brains, can please the tastes of such a one as I, brought up in the refinement and luxury of an Eastern court. In this respect, how similarly are we situated, you tied to a

princess,⁴ who only married you for your position and tried to foist on you as a son, the offspring of another : all tends to prove that neither you, nor I, are bound in any way to consider husband or wife."

" Oh, Queen, Queen, it grieves me to hear you talk like this. Remember the King is not only your husband, but my father, and to whom should he look to, for loyalty, if not from us ? "

" I may owe him allegiance," sighed the Queen, " but love, how can I give him that ? Surely, Seti, you cannot be so blind, as not to see this ? Love is a dainty flower which cannot nourish its pure bloom on the rank dung heap of iniquity !—Seti, when first I came as a captive to this court, I thought that you looked on me with some favour, that hope was to my life the one gleam of light in a world of dark trouble.—Oh, rob me not of this !—let us be all in all to each other,—the crown of Egypt is our diadem, to each of us, our objects and ambitions must be the same, and why cannot I help you revive the glorious time of the great Rameses ? Think of the monuments of his power that he has left to the world, and then turn to what your father has done ;—one victorious war, won chiefly by your skill and bravery, coupled with the superior arms and numbers of the Egyptians. Beyond this, what celebrates his name ?—Nothing !—Seti, cannot you feel with me and spare me a little of your love ? "

" Oh Queen, not another word ! No one can sympathize with your troubles more than I, who feel what you, a young girl, must suffer ; and I, on my side, will always give you the purest friendship."

" Friendship ? I ask for love, and you offer me a husk ! Oh, Seti, cannot you see that I love you, and you only," cried the young Queen, throwing her arms around

him, "surely you can return a little drop of affection to help quench my burning desires.—You are not a block of wood or stone, which cannot be moved to pity.—What ! Do I, the daughter of a king, ask for pity ? "

"Tua, Tua, this is simply madness ! How, as you are my father's wife, can I love you otherwise than in friendship ? Such love as you dream of would not only be a crime, but would surely be discovered and punished with death. My sincerest friendship, as I have said, is yours, and I will do my best to lighten the troubles and burdens which, I now see you must endure ; —Fate, not our fault, often imposes on us sufferings, which we cannot escape, however high our station may be " ; and Seti really touched to see her grief prepared to go.

"Oh, Seti, can you leave me thus ? Oh, give me but one kiss of love to cheer me on my lonely way, and to remember you by ; just one kiss, loved one " ; and, as she clung to him, she murmured, "Oh, God, might I die now, happy in thy arms," and once more she seemed to devour him with her voluptuous lips on his. So overpowered was Seti by the beauty, and passion of this lovely woman, that he forgot all discretion, and alas, gave way to the feelings she had raised in him.

How long they rested together, happy in each other's love, neither knew, the time passed all too quickly. Seti, at last recollecting their danger, quietly kissing the Queen, reminded her that for her sake, he ought to be going.

"But only till to-night, dear love," said the Queen, encircling him with her arms, "even to-morrow Pharaoh may return ;—to-night is our own, and shall be dedicated to our love."

Suddenly a slight noise near startled them, and Seti, turning round, saw the chief Eunuch move slowly away, apparently busy in picking flowers. What had this man seen or heard? No doubt, he had watched them, and henceforth they were in his power.

" Yet," thought Seti, " who would believe a eunuch against a prince's oath, backed by that of the Queen? "

Tua, also realized their peril, and turning white, almost fainted in her lover's arms. Quietly and gently, he rested her on the couch, and the next moment she was alone.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE PRINCE SENDS HIS EXCUSES TO THE QUEEN

REFLECTION made the Prince regret his folly with the Queen, he also had forgotten that he had already made an appointment for the evening with the aged prophet Roi, which, owing to the plans to be discussed, might well extend to the early morning, when he had arranged to leave the City.

He, therefore, decided it would be wiser to send a letter of excuse and risk the Queen's annoyance ; and calling Eli, he ordered him to deliver his note into the Queen's hands alone. Eli, having received these instructions, was conducted to the Queen's apartments.

Queen Tua, reclining on a couch, was being fanned by female slaves, while young girls playing on lutes and beautifully fashioned harps were singing to her the most thrilling of love songs. Joy at the prospect of love adventures with Seti filled her being, though angered at the news of the quick return of the royal court from Tanis, yet, she knew there would certainly be plenty of opportunities for her renewing her love with Seti ; at present, she was satisfied with the thoughts of the promised visit that very evening. Yes, she felt thoroughly happy while these visions floated through her mind, the girls were still softly singing her favourite love songs, when Eli was announced and word was instantly sent for him to enter.

Bowing low, the lad delivered the tablet; hastily opening the scroll, Tua read the following words :—

"HONOURED QUEEN,—Behold the fates decree that I must this evening leave on urgent affairs of the State. It appears that serious trouble is likely to arise through the threatened revolt of the Hebrew host now assembled at Goshen, should the King persist in his refusal to allow them to depart. At such a time our private feelings and desires must stand aside for the good of the State. Relying on you using your utmost influence with the great King to avert this catastrophe, and trusting to be able to thank you in person for this boon to the State, is the earnest prayer of your ever devoted servant, Seti!"

"A mere excuse," thought Tua, "So, fair sir, you think it nothing to spurn the love offered you by a Queen!"

With an impatient gesture she commanded the girls to leave her, then turning angrily to Eli, she asked :—

"At what time does the Prince leave the palace?"

"Madam—I have not the slightest knowledge of the Prince's movements."

The Queen, who had been watching him closely, suddenly exclaimed :—

"By the Gods, I believe you also are a Hebrew!"

"Yes, great Queen," replied the lad, "I am of that nationality."

"Then tell the Prince, to choose the messengers he sends in future from our own nation—as to his request, my answer shall be in my acts.—You may go."

A look on the Queen's face convinced Eli that she would not be particular how an unwelcome messenger was treated, and he felt thankful when he was safely outside her apartments. On arriving at his own quarters he found that the Prince had already set out to visit the aged prophet.

CHAPTER XXXIII

PRINCE SETI'S VISIT TO BAI

EARLY on the morrow Prince Seti, accompanied only by Eli and an attendant, started off by chariot to the country house of Bai, where it had been arranged that the Prince should privately meet several noblemen, who wished to support the measures decided on by the priesthood, should Pharaoh persist in acting in opposition to the interests of the State.

The Prince had decided to make this visit as soon as he heard from Ptahmes, that the court was on the eve of returning to Memphis.

Before the sun had reached its full height the journey was completed, and the Prince's chariot drew up before the gigantic pylon,¹ which was built in the boundary wall that surrounded the estate. The gates were immediately thrown open, and as the equipage neared the mansion, Bai approached to welcome his royal visitor, whom he immediately conducted to the suite of apartments reserved for his use, so that the Prince might rest and refresh himself after the long journey.

Prince Seti, however, merely changed his costume, and, having accepted the customary chaplet of flowers, proceeded to join the few guests who had been honoured with an invitation to welcome him.

Musicians, singers, and dancers² were waiting to

amuse his Highness until the hour of dinner. The songs and music were of the gayest, and the dancers, who had been specially selected for their beauty, were equally renowned for their skill; some wore simply a strip of leather held up by an embroidered belt, so that their graceful forms might be seen to the best advantage by the guests, others were clad in light transparent dresses of beautifully blended colours, fastened at the waist by a simple girdle, and allowed to flow loosely to their ankles.^{2a}

Various exhibitions by conjurors and acrobats followed, till dinner was announced; then all standing the Prince proceeded to the great hall where a sumptuous repast had been prepared. The Prince's happy and cordial manner soon put all the guests at their ease, and wit and laughter made the time pass gaily; when the meal was nearly finished the customary figure of Osiris, in the form of a miniature mummy lying on a bier, was drawn round the hall, the guests in the meantime being reminded: "That men ought to love one another, and avoid those evils which tend to make them consider life too long, when it is in reality too short." After dinner the dancing and music were resumed and necklaces and other rewards given to the most skilful performers. The rest of the evening was spent by the Prince in chatting with those he wished to honour with his confidence.

The apartments set aside for Prince Seti were in a pavilion which was connected with the mansion by a corridor; here, waited on by his own attendant and Eli, he was able to enjoy that peace and quiet, which was the more appreciated by one who was satiated with the empty ceremonials and pageants of the Court.

Early on the morning following their arrival, Eli was awakened to take a hasty repast, and then told to attend his patron in the garden.

Though the day was so young that the birds had not finished their first songs of welcome to the early morn, he found the Prince finishing a light breakfast, and arranging his notes for a document, which, after his meal, he dictated to Eli ; it related to the succession, and went fully into those instructions to the nobles and priesthood, as to what he wished carried out, should he lose his life in heading the effort to force Pharaoh to free the land of the Hebrews.

The lad could not help feeling surprised at the hard and stringent commands which he was ordered to write down, and his face must have mirrored his thoughts, for after the Prince had finished he said :—

" When one is young, it is often hard to understand the necessity of sternness ; in most cases I admit it is a mistake, but in this world one often meets with those who should rather be termed devils than human beings ; these are of such an opposite nature to that of a good sympathetic soul like your sister, that it is hard to realize that all humanity are blessed with souls, as the priests try and teach us. It is on account of the continual remembrance of your sister, which your face conjures up, and for her dear sake, that I will recount to you certain incidents in my life, which may serve as a warning to a young man like yourself, and thus perhaps save you from the chance of falling into such a trap as that which has ruined my entire life ; at the same time it will explain to you my reason for arranging the succession in the manner which I have determined.

" You are happily ignorant of court intrigue, but I

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may tell you that a Prince, surrounded by enemies as I am, must always be prepared to meet death at any moment, especially at a time when so many important events are on the eve of taking place. Put your writing materials therefore aside, while I briefly tell you how I was fooled by a woman."

CHAPTER XXXIV

STORY OF PRINCE SETI'S EARLY MARRIAGE

"**L**IKE most of the royal Egyptian Princes, I was educated with the sons of nobles at Ramessium, the College founded at Thebes by my grandfather, where all students were treated alike, regardless of rank. After reaching the age for leaving Ramessium, I was allowed to stay for a period in the royal palace, to enable me to become accustomed to court etiquette, before joining the army.

"Released from the strict rule of the College, I doubly enjoyed the freedom and gaiety of the royal circle, and it was not long before I became enamoured with one of the most lovely maidens at the Court; this was Takhat, a daughter of Pharaoh by a foreign princess, who was one of the King's secondary wives.

"I found Takhat enchanting, but shortly I discovered to my dismay, that she was just as free with her favours with any youth who might please her fancy.

"Angry with myself for not having had wit enough to detect sooner the worthless spirit which lived behind such a beautiful mask, I tried to shun her society, and for a time at least was proof against female charms, gradually however I was weak enough to again fall under her influence.

"My comrades did not fail, however, to warn me, and my female relatives plainly told me how I was being

fooled ; but I unfortunately put this down to a love of mischief-making and envy ; and although these reports made me unhappy, my love was fanned to a still higher flame by the dread of losing her.

" At last, however, even my credulity received an almost fatal shock, for, when strolling in a secluded part of the palace grounds, I suddenly came in sight of Princess Takhat in the arms of Amenmes, a scribe ; so engrossed were they with each other, that neither of them heard nor perceived me ; I could plainly see that this was no chance flirtation, they were evidently lovers of long standing, and freely yielded to their desires with all the voluptuous extravagance of our exotic nature.

" They were still in each others' arms when I left them ; utterly disgusted, I departed from the city and did not return for the space of several weeks. When next I met Princess Takhat I charged her with her duplicity, but she simply laughed at my jealousy, over what she termed 'a simple flirtation,' saying :—

" 'I know all you must think and may feel inclined to say, but,' she added, 'you were ever fair, and will not I hope deny me the chance of showing how greatly you have misjudged me,' then leading me to one of the soft luxuriant couches in a sequestered alcove she made me sit down beside her. Lad, you can scarcely imagine, when one adores a being in spite of her faults, how willingly the fair one's explanations are accepted, and how soon all is forgiven. Alas, even the best of men are deceived in matters of affection, for being honest themselves, they cannot conceive the falseness of a bad woman's heart.

" Blinded by my love, I forgot my doubts, in fact all

the world except the Queen of my heart, whom I held wrapt in my arms.

" For weeks we continued to meet, I, in the meantime, living intoxicated in a golden dream of love. Then a break came ; Takhat being obliged, she said, to visit some very dear friends in the country, during which time my ardour was kept up to boiling point by loving epistles from my mistress.

" A little over five months after our reconciliation, I received a plaintive note from the princess, saying she was ill, and imploring me to come and see her.

" Within an hour of receiving her message I started on a swift horse and after a ride of over thirty miles, reached the mansion where she was staying. The husband of Princess Takhat's friend met me at the porch, and told me the invalid was asleep, but begged me in the meantime to accept some refreshments, after which he asked me to take a stroll round the grounds. No sooner were we in the garden than he began talking about the Princess ; and congratulated me on the birth of a Prince ; I assured him that such a thing was impossible ; but I soon found that it was useless protesting, for Takhat had already completely convinced my host and his wife that her statements were true.

" Utterly bewildered by the gross deception which the girl had practised, I refused to see her, for I was told she was still in a weak and critical condition, and I knew I could not bridle my wrath in her presence.

" Six weeks afterwards, I was commanded to appear before my grandfather Rameses II, who had been acquainted by Takhat that I was responsible for her misfortune. It was in vain I protested my innocence, too many witnesses were called to prove our constant

meetings, and Takhat being the king's own daughter my offence was considered unpardonable.

" Even now, I can remember how the tall, slim and muscular figure of my grandfather¹ looked that day, his thin aquiline nose, his firm, compressed lips curled with a cruel sarcastic smile, and his large protruding eyes gazing at me with pitiless contempt, as he, in his usual dogmatic tone, asked me how, having treated a daughter of his in such a manner, I expected to live ? Again I pleaded my entire innocence ; but the King, looking at me with scorn, condemned me to die by my own hand, giving me the respite of a day to take leave of my friends and arrange my affairs. To that act of clemency alone, do I owe my life : for Princess Takhat, hearing what my punishment was to be, sought her father, and by her wonderful power of persuasion, prevailed on him to grant her my life, which he did on condition that we should be married immediately.

" Since that wedding day I have seen as little as possible of my wife, she had at the risk of my life, and the sacrifice of my happiness, gained her end—the chance of some day bearing the title of Queen, and the hope that her son might succeed to the Kingdom of the Double Crown, but to show how she still resented, that the man she loved was not the heir to the throne, she named her son Amen-meses, after her lover. She has now two sons, neither of whom are mine, in fact, I believe the second child² to be by my father, after whom she has named him, Merri-Amen, and in order not to make the scandal too glaring, both boys were surnamed Sotep-en-ra to show their descent from Rameses the Great.

" You may, therefore, now understand my reason for endeavouring to insure that neither shall be my suc-

sor. The true heiress to the throne is Princess Tausert,^{2a} the child of Rameses II, by his royal daughter and heiress, Meryt-Amen,^{2b} for no one has the royal blood more pure, nor can anyone legally dispute her right to succeed to the throne, in case of my death. For even if I were fortunate enough to win your sister's hand, I am quite aware that the children of our union would not be allowed by the priesthood nor nobles to ascend the throne."

Eli gave a sigh as the Prince finished speaking and said :—

" Truly, my lord, it is no wonder that you think lightly of men's honour, when you have been so falsely treated."

At the commencement of his visit the Prince was engaged for several days, in receiving nobles and governors, who wished to confer privately with him, and receive his instructions.

Within a fortnight, Princess Tausert arrived, this lady, now that Queen Ast-nefert,³ Menenptah's royal wife, and her daughter, Princess Arit-nefert, were dead, was after the King and the Crown Prince, the greatest personage in the Empire, being of the purest royal blood, for she was, as before stated, the daughter of Rameses the Great by his royal daughter, Meryt-Amen,⁴ and was known as " the Lady of both lands, Princess of the North and South, the Great Royal Lady," and in succession to Seti, claimed the crown of Pharaoh as her birthright. Hence the opposition of Princess Takhat, who was but only a daughter of Rameses the Great by one of his favourites.

It was soon apparent to Eli, that although this Royal Princess appeared deeply attached to the Crown Prince, the Prince regarded her only with friendship,

or at most, with that affection which an elder relative might bestow on a younger.

Day after day was now passed in delightful excursions, which afforded the greatest pleasure to Eli. This happy time, however, was but too soon ended, for a message from Ptahmes, stating that such grave disturbances were occurring at Memphis, that the Prince's presence was urgently required. A sudden change of weather produced probably by the eclipse which took place later in the month, however, rendered the journey for a time impossible. The roads were flooded and the violent rains had made the river so unsafe from floating debris that all traffic had to be suspended. It was appalling to witness the distress caused by the hurricanes and floods, especially after the scourge of locusts, which had previously stripped all vegetation throughout the Nile valley. This second misfortune in fact completed the ruin of thousands, who depended on their crops for a livelihood, and in many cases the very homesteads had been washed away.

CHAPTER XXXV

PTAHMES CONTINUES HIS NARRATIVE— THE PLAGUES OF EGYPT

ON reaching Memphis, I found that Prince Seti, profiting by my advice, had left for a visit to one of my kinsmen, as soon as he had received intelligence of the return of the Court. In this he acted wisely, for the King was now ever ready to quarrel with him, partly I believe on account of the Prince's great popularity, yet, would I gladly have had his counsel during the troublesome times which followed.

It was only a few days after we had returned to Memphis, when early one morning, around the Temple where I was staying, I heard a great uproar, in fact so loud was the clamour, that I feared an insurrection had broken out.

Summoning one of the attendants I learnt that the people declared that the springs of the city and surrounding neighbourhood had been turned to blood ; having some of this water brought to me, I analysed it, and as I expected, found the colour was occasioned by a powerful chemical, Moses, by means of his thousands of countrymen, during the night, had had most of the springs in the district tampered with.

Waiting on Pharaoh by command, I exposed the imposture, by dropping acid into some clear water, which immediately produced the same effect, and Pharaoh

laughed with scorn. Then, the wily Israelites had the borders of the Nile and all the waters in the neighbourhood so treated, that the frogs could no longer dwell therein, but were forced to seek the dry land, so that every place was full of them. This, I also exposed, by pouring acid into one of the ponds, so that every reptile immediately left it.

Nor did their malice stop here, creeping with vermin, as were most of the Israelites, owing to their filthy habits, they managed with great ingenuity to distribute these insects on our persons, about our dwellings and also tortured the cattle in like manner.

Even into the Palace was vermin introduced, so that the very person of Pharaoh was attacked, and the priests, who, according to our rules, wash three times a day, were yet unable to keep themselves free from these abominations. Refuse was also thrown about, so as to produce flies, and thousands of our cattle were inoculated with a distemper, so that those who ate the flesh broke out in boils and tumours.

I, therefore, waited on Pharaoh, and told him that insurrections would certainly take place, unless he rid us of these cursed foreigners ; but the Queen declared he would show weakness, and it would but be a proof that he was forced to do their bidding, if he gave way ; she advised that it would be better to set them at some fresh work, and thus break their stubborn spirit, and suggested that a summer palace be built for her on the island in lake Moeris ; and Pharaoh swore he would not give way to their will, and that it should be even as she wished.

It so happened, at this period, that the whole surrounding country was swept by fearful hail storms, so that nearly all the crops and fruits were destroyed,

and the locusts, by which some parts of Egypt are annually visited, finding no sustenance, came down throughout the Lower Nile ; unfortunately, as no precautions had been taken, they entirely ate up the remaining crops, so that the husbandmen lost heart and declared that the land was cursed by reason of the Hebrews, and that famine must now ensue.

This occurred just before the total eclipse, which our astronomers had foreseen would cover the land with darkness for the space of a whole day,¹ and was the chief cause of the atmospheric disturbances. This made even the Queen afraid, and she herself began to urge the departure of the Hebrews ; and I was commanded to come before Pharaoh, for the King was becoming exceedingly uneasy at the attitude of the people, who declared that these evils were the work of Moses.

As I entered the King's presence and made my reverence, Pharaoh, turning sharply round towards me, in a haughty tone demanded :—

" How is it, Sir Priest, that your Gods have forsaken the land ? And why are these wonders worked at the wish of Moses, which you and your priests are powerless to avert ? Surely even you must confess, that these signs are beyond human power, and prove that the God of the Israelites has gained control of the earth. Explain, I pray you, what this means ! Have our ancient Gods lost their power ?—Have our people sinned ?—Or are you and your priests unworthy of attention ? One thing seems certain, you no longer have power to propitiate them."

Pharaoh was evidently perplexed, for he added :—

" If you have greater power than Moses and Aaron, prove it by removing this darkness."

"Great King, neither Moses, Aaron, nor any human being can control the planets. It could, however, have been foretold by any of the high priesthood, that this darkness must take place ; this total eclipse was fully foreseen by our learned father, Roma, the second prophet of Ammon ; and notice thereof was given to the High Priests of all the temples throughout the land. But Roi enjoined the strictest secrecy, until he had communicated it to your royal ear. You, however, refused to see him, and by some unknown means the matter became known to Moses, who has used this knowledge to work on your credulity. Be it known to you, Great King, that the shadow will pass at eventide, and to-morrow the sun will again radiate his warmth throughout the land. As to the matter of the budding rod and the serpent, is it not simply knowledge used to delude the ignorant ? Surely, my brethren have shown you greater wonders than these ? Were not you put into converse with your late brother Khaemuas, although you were over a hundred miles apart ? Have not I shown you how to capture the force of the wind, so that you may by its power, raise hundreds of tons at your wish ?—Has not the strength of the Nile been bridled and made to obey your will ? And yet, you, Oh Pharaoh, marvel at tricks known to every tyro of science."

But the King smiled at me scornfully.

"Give me then some manifestation of your pretended power," cried Menenptah. "Perhaps you can show me the future ? "

And he sat smiling sarcastically.

"Yes, Oh King," I replied, "I can even show you the future."

Then, drawing myself up to my full height, I concen-

trated my gaze upon him, until like a serpent fascinating a rabbit, his spirit quailed, and reflected mine ; and to his mind, I showed the emptiness of his ambitions ; I pictured to his imagination the great city of Thebes in ruins, his palace a heap of broken columns and scattered stones, the embankments of the Nile destroyed, and the whole plain a flood, in which stood up the remains of Ramessium, with the great seated statue of Rameses overthrown and the stupendous colossi of Amenhotep III alone remaining to overlook the dreary waste of ruined temples, mausoleums, and palaces ; turning his mind to look towards the East, I mirrored the great Temple of " Epet " in ruins, and the site of the beautiful Luxor, but marked by a few broken columns.

Lastly, I led him to the remaining stones of his own mausoleum, which he had erected by robbing the temples of his forefathers, to make it a marvel of art. Lions, jackals, and snakes crept among the few remaining walls. Nothing remained of the beauty of these mighty monuments of the once glorious Thebes, the capital of the great Egyptian Empire when in the zenith of its power. And to make his mind even still more realize the littleness of mankind, and the nonentity of Kings, I showed him his own tomb ; behold, bats hovered round his sarcophagus, on which were carved his royal name, titles, and verses praising his career ; but as I made him approach, he saw that it was EMPTY, and I pictured to his mind myself seated at the head of the sarcophagus, crying out :—" This is all that is left of the works of Menenptah, the Royal Pharaoh, the son of the Gods, whose remains now mingle but with the dust of the desert ! "

Then shaking myself free of the terrible vision of the

future, which had well nigh overwhelmed me, I commanded Pharaoh to awake.

Trembling, the King regained consciousness, and with curses ordered me from his sight.

"Oh King," cried I, "live for ever, you ask me to show you the future—and seeing it—yet are not content," and bowing low before him, I took my leave.

That night no one dare approach Pharaoh, and, for many days after, he refused to see me; but he was still determined not to let the Israelites leave the land, Prince Amen-meses and Queen Tua also urging the King to remain firm to his decision.

By order of the aged Roi, I then sent to Prince Seti, and, as soon as the terrible weather permitted, he returned to Memphis, taking up his quarters in the Palace. On the very day of his arrival, I waited on the Prince, telling him all that had happened in his absence, and that now the ministers called upon him to fulfil his promise, and help us govern the country for the good of the people; and I went over with him all the details of our arrangements, telling him that it had also been decided to detain Pharaoh and Queen Tua on the island of Moeris, where they would have to remain for the rest of their lives; and that Queen Takhat and her sons were to be banished from the Kingdom.

It had been decided that the Prince should at once inherit the Crown, making his first act the purging of the country of the Israelites. The evening was far advanced, when I quitted his Highness to carry out our final arrangements.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE QUEEN'S VENGEANCE

QUEEN TUA was not long before she endeavoured to console herself for not being able to captivate Prince Seti, and, wishing to wound him deeply, she determined, if possible, to infatuate Prince Amen-meses, who hated his reputed father with all the bitterness of his evil nature.

This handsome, but dissolute man, had lately, through her influence, been given the command of the Body-guard, and was now endeavouring to gain the position of Commander-in-chief ; he had not wit enough to see that the Queen was only using him for her own ends, but attributed his rapid advancement to his own abilities.

It did not take long for the Queen to make this worthless man madly in love with her, but she, at the same time, despised him and could not feel the slightest affection for him, either on account of his being so easily won, or perhaps, she realized how utterly worthless was his nature ; yet no one in the Kingdom could have been more ready to aid her in ruining the Crown Prince, for once Prince Seti was removed, Amen-meses had every hope of seizing the throne.

No sooner had the Court returned to Memphis than her anger against Seti rekindled, and she determined, if possible, utterly to destroy any good feeling which

might still exist between Pharaoh and his son ; to do this effectually, she resolved to make use of the eunuch, and thus at the same time, employ and remove a danger.

On one of the warmest afternoons, when Pharaoh had just risen from his siesta, and was sitting in a chamber overlooking the beautiful pleasure grounds, Queen Tua came to his side, carrying fruits and iced wine, of which she pressed the King to partake.

" Ah, how I should like to enjoy the cool breeze in the shade of the palace gardens, and to be free for a brief time of the court retinue," she said with a sigh. " Would it be tiring my lord too much to accompany his handmaiden ? "

" If I care not to come, why not go by yourself and enjoy the fresh air ? "

" Ah, my lord, the gardens may be beautiful, and it would undoubtedly be delightfully cool by the river ; but, unfortunately, they are no longer private."

" No longer private ! " echoed Pharaoh, " What mean you ? "

" You seem to forget, my lord, that the Crown Prince is at Memphis."

" The Crown Prince ? What of that ? You do not mean to suggest that Prince Seti can be obnoxious to you ? He who should do all in his power to make life agreeable to you."

" Ah, he is very attentive—very ;—and yet, there is a way of trying to be even too agreeable, of course, some young women may like to be fondled and kissed—but for my part, I think it hardly the way for a son to treat his father's wife."

" By the Gods, he has dared to do this, and you have not denounced him ? "

"Should I be the cause to raise enmity between father and son? No, I would sooner bear the insult, but you may understand, I do not mean to visit the gardens any longer unaccompanied."

Pharaoh even now felt incredulous.

"I know he has a gay, careless nature, and a frivolous manner with women, but that he would dare molest the Queen, I little expected. This is monstrous!—though of course he will deny it!"

"That will be difficult, my liege, seeing that the chief eunuch saw his offence. But I laughed it off, 'twas but a folly, a sudden passing frenzy, of which I pray you take no heed, nor can it re-occur, for he shall never again have the opportunity."

"By Osiris! I will know the rights of this," muttered Pharaoh, as he strode up and down the apartment in a fury, and sounding the gong, he ordered the eunuch to be brought before him.

The man, as he entered, knew instinctively why he was wanted, and as he cast himself down at Pharaoh's feet, his mind rapidly surveyed his precarious position; if he admitted that he had seen anything improper, then, would he certainly be punished for not having reported the matter to the King, on the other hand, if he was the means of bringing trouble on the Crown Prince, what suffering might he not be creating for the future? Yet he had already been commanded by the Queen to denounce Prince Seti, when he was called before the King—and the Queen was not a woman to be trifled with. All these truths flashed across his brain as he lay grovelling at Pharaoh's feet.

"Slave!" cried the King in anger, "How comes it that I was not told of this offence against the Queen?"

"Great King, as the Queen did not complain, I thought it must be some harmless pleasantry with the Crown Prince. I was at a respectful distance picking flowers, and I saw nothing to lead me to suppose that the Queen had been molested. I was within call, had she needed me; and I dared not approach without her request."

"How am I to understand this, Madam?" asked the King with a sneer.

"It is surely not difficult. Was I to expose my shame, and the baseness of your son and heir, before a thing like this?" she answered, darting a scornful glance at the trembling slave, while she feared her prey might yet escape her. "I should have thought you would have given me credit for more pride in your race, Great King!"

"True, and you did well; but even the first in the land shall learn that Egypt's Queen cannot be insulted with impunity."

Then calling an attendant, he ordered that the chamberlain should acquaint the Crown Prince that his immediate attendance was required.

Prince Seti had just quitted Ptahmes, and was arranging with Eli the plans for the succeeding day, when the King's message was delivered. His first idea was that the King had by some means heard of the plot, and wanted his advice or assistance, in trying to quell it; for it was an unusual occurrence for Pharaoh to summon him so abruptly; it generally meant that the King was in some extreme dilemma, or in a fit of uncontrollable anger.

He had no sooner, however, entered his father's presence, and there saw the Queen and eunuch waiting, than he knew what danger he had to face. Bending

his knee to the King he waited while Pharaoh sharply demanded :—

“ And how comes it, Seti, that I hear you have been molesting the Queen ? ”

“ I molest the Queen ? Nay, my Father, then I can answer you have been told a lie.”

“ Ah, say you so ? ” was the scornful reply. “ Then it is not true that you defiled the Queen's purity with a lewd kiss, nor that you put your arms around her ? ”

Seti remained silent.

“ Speak, is this true, or is it not ? ” shouted the King in anger.

“ I certainly kissed her.”

“ Oh ! ‘ You certainly kissed her ! ’ You stand there, and openly confess to me, her husband, that you did this thing ? Have you no shame ? ”

“ Would you have me tell you a lie ? ” answered Seti. “ You asked me, and I confess the truth, in a moment of excitement I so far forgot myself as to do this thing, which no one regrets more than I.”

“ Aye, and shall regret ! ” muttered the King.

“ Sire, no man such as I takes these liberties uninvited, and she who courts such, from bad motives, is no longer worthy of respect. Surely, if the Queen had loved her Lord, she would not seek the embraces, of which she now complains ? ”

“ What ! ” cried Pharaoh, “ you try to blame the Queen, who has done her best to screen you ! —Base hound ! —Guards, secure the Prince and lodge him in our private dungeon. Away with him, I say ! ”

Prince Seti made no further protest, but simply bowed and followed the officer, knowing that resistance would be in vain.

CHAPTER XXXVII

RACHEL ENTERS THE PALACE

ELI had from the first been liked by the Court officials, and before long he became a general favourite, apparently too young to become a serious rival in love affairs, he was regarded as a happy, good-hearted youngster who was always ready to do good around him.

Thus he was welcomed by all and often heard items of news which were extremely useful to Ptahmes, who, wishing to have a reliable person who could know whom the Queen received, went out of his way to make much of this lad, who was so devoted to the interests of Prince Seti, in fact, nothing he could do to serve the Prince seemed neglected.

No one in the Palace, therefore, was more shocked than he to hear the tidings of the Prince's arrest, which ill news reached him almost instantly; fully aware of the grave results which would follow if the documents of the Prince were discovered containing, as they did, much which would betray the arrangements of the secret council, the lad instantly concealed these about his person and hastened to Ptahmes, with whom he had a long and serious conversation, and it was at this time Eli learnt all that Ptahmes had been able to discover regarding Isaac.

After leaving the Prime Minister, Eli visited the King's chief dancer, with whom he was a favourite, and

successfully arranged for the entry of his sister Rachel as a singer among Pharaoh's private troupe, the selection of whom was left absolutely to the discretion of the leader of the dance,¹ who was responsible for the various amusements arranged for the entertainment of the Monarch.

It was shortly after Rachel had entered upon her duties at the palace, that Benjamin arrived at Memphis. He was still weak and suffering from the effects of his terrible illness ; seeking his mother and family, he had recounted to them the deaths of his father, his uncle, and Isaac, with all the ghastly particulars. As for the jewels, he said, it would be death to anyone to fetch them, and the little family must now face the battle of life with what they had left.

Benjamin hearing that Rachel had secured a position at the Palace, asked to see her, and was given an invitation to meet her in the public gardens near the river. Here Benjamin recounted to her his sufferings, not yet daring to allude to Isaac. At last he was unable to evade the subject any longer, Rachel asking him :—

“ And do you know what has become of my father ? ”

As feelingly as he could, he gently broke the news to Rachel.

“ Ah, those cursed jewels, instinctively I seemed to know that evil would come of such terrible traffic, and warned my father against it. Poor fellow, the infatuation for acquiring wealth has at last been the end of him. But how is it I have not heard from his agent ? ”

“ That is only natural. The man is an Egyptian, and knows that it is more than probable that all the Israelites are leaving the country under Moses. If that is so, who is there to dispute his title to everything ? ”

“ I hardly think he would be so base—it would be robbery.”

" That may be, but you will see, he will, if possible, evade communicating with you. Rachel, you are now alone and unprotected, very shortly in all probability Moses will succeed in forcing Pharaoh to allow our departure, let me, although younger than you, act as your friend and adviser, and persuade you to take up your dwelling with my mother who will gladly shelter you. Believe me, even you may not be safe in the palace. Fearful measures are now going to be used against the Egyptians, and who can tell before they thrust us out, if they may not try and seek revenge on all those of our people they can lay their hands on."

" Nay, Benjamin, it is doubtful what course I may pursue, I may even naturalize myself and remain with the Egyptians."

" Impossible ! Rachel, you must be mad. See how we are hated ; even the richest and most powerful among us are treated as dogs, and regarded with scorn. Surely your proud spirit would not let you live in peace under such conditions. Would you, moreover, forsake our God Jehovah, and worship Ammon ?"

" Ah, Benjamin, do you then think our nation has a special God for itself ? Does not Nature prove to you that all things are guided by ONE spirit ? That there is one power by whose ideas the planets and stars move in prescribed forms and mathematical precision, even as the waves and all other things on our little globe follow the same divine law ? Call him Jehovah, Osiris, or what you will, makes no difference to his being, if some call you Benjamin, and if others call you Isaac, it would not make your individuality change.

" But when I see Moses descending to paltry tricks, and pretending that natural movements of the planets are caused by the Creator for the special benefit of our

nation, it makes me turn from such blasphemies ; and now as you hint our people contemplate crime against those who have fed them, I begin to hate the Hebrews as only an Egyptian can. Doubtless, whatever form their spite may take, it will again be described as the work of Jehovah ! ”

Rachel was evidently in no gentle humour, and Benjamin saw it was an unfavourable time to urge her any further to join his family, therefore, escorting her back to the palace he there left her, and returned to his mother's lodging, where he helped prepare for their expected departure.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

RACHEL RELEASES THE PRINCE.

RACHEL who soon became at home in her fresh surroundings, was especially careful to guard against causing jealousy, and quickly became intimate with most of the troupe, making a special friend of a dancer, whose lover was the soldier especially entrusted with the care of the Crown Prince.

Rachel often accompanied her friend to the guard room when this man was on duty, many a sprightly song she sang them, and what was then more appreciated by the stalwart soldier, was the constant supply of good rich wine, which this young girl so often brought with her, sent, so she said, by a cousin who had a vineyard, and which it was impossible for her to consume without assistance.

Rachel was, through this man, enabled to forward many messages and delicacies from Ptahmes, and her brother, to the royal captive. It was during an afternoon, when she had especially pleased Pharaoh with her fresh songs, and she knew Ptahmes was expected at the palace, that she joined her friend in the guard room. Rachel appeared exceedingly merry, though in reality she felt ill with anxiety, for she had heard that some frightful crimes were meditated by her compatriots, and she had even been urged to join in assisting them during that very night in the palace, but having

at once indignantly refused to listen to their proposals, she, unfortunately, was afterwards unable to learn any further details.

When the doors of the guard-room were closed, she commenced a rollicking hunting song, then followed a tender love song, which brought back to both her companions the sweet memories of their first loves, when all the future looked so glorious.

Then they drank from a special bottle in honour of Rachel's success in pleasing the King ; another touching love song followed, and the dancer drew herself nearer to her lover's couch, so that she might rest in his arms and dream of love and happiness. There deep in the bowels of the earth, from whence so often terrible groans had issued, of which no sound could reach the apartments above, flowed on the sweet music, lulling to a peaceful unconsciousness the guard and his mistress, the dancing girl.

At last Rachel saw her object was attained, they both slept heavily, and the powerfully drugged wine would render them unconscious for several hours.

Hastily taking the keys from the jailer's belt she cautiously descended to the dungeon.

Prince Seti had gradually become partly accustomed to his prison house. At first his whole system had been deranged by paroxysms of rage, which even troubled his sleep and entirely upset his nervous system. He asked himself—If there was a higher power ? which he now began to doubt. Why were such women as the Queen permitted to live ? And he felt that if the scoundrel, who called himself his son, was within his reach, he should feel justified in taking his life. Thus was a good man made to feel the thirst of blood, this wish to

destroy those who had done so much evil, and to prevent them from doing further mischief. For it is such beings as the Queen and his son who often render earth a hell to their fellow beings.

Still the Prince felt that there were yet some good souls in the world ; Eli, of whom he had taken but little attention, except to notice how extremely trustworthy and thoughtful he was, in spite of his parentage, and the craft and cunning of centuries, being in his blood, had now shown a purity of nature so unalloyed with selfishness, that Prince Seti felt he could love the lad ; hardly a day passed, without, through bribery or some other means, the guards brought from Ptahmes or Eli, some little thing which might soften his imprisonment ; truly he had been wise to follow Rachel's advice, in allowing her brother to act as his attendant ; often his thoughts went back to the days he had spent with her at Thebes, and what most fostered this was that he continually heard a voice singing in the guard room which reminded him of hers ; but the soldier on being questioned on this point was obstinately mute, he was not going to confess that he had so far broken the rules, even to a prisoner whom he felt certain would never leave the cell alive.

Many an hour the Prince spent in brooding over the chances of escape, with which, through carefully worded messages, Ptahmes and Eli buoyed him up. How he cursed his luck, and wished that he might have been born to the lot of a simple husbandman, who, working in the open country, could live face to face with nature, and ignorant of all the snares and shams of court life ; surely a rough and natural life would have been far happier, for in his day dreams he never thought of the want and penury, which usually accompany such an

existence. One afternoon, he was laying back on his rough couch, wishing for a breath of fresh air and a gleam of daylight, when the strains of a spirited hunting song came from the guard room ; so vividly did it recall scenes through which he had passed, that he seemed once more to feel the power of his horse beneath him, as he flew across the desert to meet a beast turned at bay—then the uplifted spear—the tremendous contact—Ah !—the weapon had snapped, and the heavy beast was thundering after him. Again the singer's voice arose, describing the excitement of refacing his adversary, and the final struggle with a mighty bison. So vividly were the scenes from the past recalled to his mind, that he sighed—and sighed still more deeply, as he listened to the plaintive love songs which followed. Alas ! all such pleasures had passed away from him for ever.

The music had ceased only a few minutes, when his anxious ear caught the sound of a stealthy step, then a fumbling of some unaccustomed hand opening the bars and locks of the prison door. Surely his time had not yet come, when the silken cord would dangle before his eyes ? The Prince anxiously waited, clutching at the dagger which Eli had sent him hidden in a pasty—then as the door opened softly, he discerned by the feeble light the form of a woman !

Evidently the Queen had come to gloat over his downfall !

" Well, are you content ? " he demanded fiercely, " Is your wanton soul satisfied with your work ? Foul fiend in the form of an angel ! "

" Ah," said a soft voice, " I have evidently made a mistake. Forgive me, Prince, I mistook you for my Lord Horus, you are outwardly so much alike."

Seti could hardly believe his ears. "Rachel!" he exclaimed, "how comes it that you are here?"

"And you, Horus, how is it that you suffer in the stead of Prince Seti?"

"Ah, Rachel, I should have told you before. Horus and Seti are one. But answer me. How and why are you here? Sweet girl, do you know you risk your life? Back! Back! ere it is too late, one kiss and begone!"

"Nay, Seti, if I must call you so, my plans are not so ill laid; you are now free, there stands the open door, and Ptahmes will soon be above to welcome you."

"Free?" cried Seti incredulously.

"Yes, free, but I warn you there is a battle yet to fight, which will require all your tact and brains. Come, dear, give me another kiss and then I must begone, here is the key, stand still, so that I may loose your poor hands and legs. Ah, the traitress, might I but deal with her as I wish, and she would cease to exist."

Quickly and deftly she undid the locks, the chains fell down—and the Prince was free. Ah! how he stretched his limbs!

"And tell me how has Eli served you?"

"As no one but a brother could. Words can never express my gratitude.

"Ah! And did you find him as I told you, that he is somewhat like me in appearance?"

"As like as two peas, in fact often as he looked at me, it seemed to be with your own sweet eyes."

"And if it were so?"

"Rachel?"

"And you never guessed it till now? In your case, love has indeed been blind. But now, we must not waste precious moments. Up to the guard room and there await my lord Ptahmes; there is much yet to do."

Leaving the cell they mounted to the guard room, where Seti was surprised to find his jailer asleep with his arms round a young girl.

"Now stay here, you need not be afraid of waking them, they are well in the land of Nod, which they cannot quit for hours to come," and giving him one more kiss, Rachel left by the guards' entry, re-entered the King's private apartments, and joined the attendants in Pharaoh's chamber, where she anxiously awaited the arrival of Lord Ptahmes

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE QUEEN'S INFLUENCE ON PHARAOH

QUEEN TUA's easy success in carrying out her vengeance on Prince Seti, made her eager to remove the man she detested most in the whole world, namely her husband. Her manner towards him since he had imprisoned Seti was changed, instead of appearing morose, ill-tempered and avoiding him, as had been her wont, she now seemed cheerful, good humoured and never so happy as when in his presence, and of late, she studied in every way to please him, and soothe his irritable disposition ; for hours she sat with him trying to win his good will, plying him with wine, till he was stupid, and endeavouring to persuade him to leave to her any tedious work, thus Pharaoh had gradually become more and more slothful, looking to her to read the daily reports, and, in most cases, even leaving his decisions to her judgment.

" Why, great King, should you weary yourself with affairs of State ? Leave the carrying out of your wishes to your ministers, and as to the decisions and signatures, do not I already do much to relieve you ? Give me but the power, and I would willingly undertake everything. Surely you have done enough for your country, and should now pass the rest of your days in one long holiday, which you and I could enjoy together."

But by no inducement or flattery could she at present prevail on Pharaoh to accede to her wishes, nor could

she persuade him to carry out capital punishment on Seti, though she still hoped in the end to gain her desire, and then, when her authority was fully established and Prince Seti removed, would she teach Pharaoh what manner of woman she was, and show him if she had forgotten the way he had treated her father; till then, patiently and meekly must she study his pleasure, make the most of her opportunities, and be content with exercising and extending the power she had already obtained.

The one man she dreaded most in the kingdom was Ptahmes, the chief minister, who, from his position in the priesthood and holding the whole government of the country in his hands, was at present too powerful to attack and far too clever to be entangled in the web by which she had captured the Prince. She little knew that through his spies, Ptahmes was aware that by wine, drugs, and every kind of debauchery she was endeavouring to sap Pharaoh's intellect, and when he was unconscious through narcotics and therefore harmless, she spent most of her time with her lover Amen-meses, who at her instigation was, by bribes and promises, trying his best to create a revolution in the army, whereby they hoped to seize the throne.

Ptahmes was now convinced that Pharaoh's intellect for the time was practically dead, and that the gathering of the discontented Israelites, the murmur of the Egyptians, and the disorders fostered by Amen-meses throughout the troops, were matters which now threatened to disturb the peace of the country, if not dealt with at once. Prince Seti, the one man capable of saving the situation, was imprisoned through the wiles of the Queen, and Ptahmes knowing how necessary it was, to have a popular and powerful figurehead for his

coup-d'état, had determined to make a desperate effort to rescue the Prince, and to take immediate advantage of the Queen's illness, which gave him a favourable opportunity of personally dealing with Pharaoh.

When Ptahmes arrived at the palace for this purpose, he was informed by the chamberlain that Pharaoh was, unfortunately, in no fit state to attend to State affairs, as he was at times not even in his right mind. But the minister would take no denial, he knew that the Israelites were planning some fresh devilment, and it was necessary for him to be armed with Pharaoh's full authority, to deal with the matter in a decisive manner, for he had determined that either the King must let the Israelites go, or abdicate. He, therefore, told the chamberlain, that if the King was in such a state, he intended to have an antidote administered, and that he, himself, would remain with Pharaoh till he was sufficiently recovered to sign the necessary authority, and attend the meeting of ministers ; which he, Ptahmes, had summoned for the early morning.

The King, half drunk with wine, lay on a couch in his beautifully-decorated apartment, overlooking the palace gardens ; for a wonder he was in a good humour, the chief dancer had not only pleased him by her own performances, but had introduced a fresh singer who, during that afternoon, had given a charming rendering of some songs concerning mirth and love. Pharaoh liked variety and through the Queen's illness he had of late been excessively dull ; he was humming over the air of the song which had most pleased him, when the arrival of Ptahmes, the chief minister was announced.

A drunken nod was all the notice he vouchsafed to the minister's obeisance.

" May the vengeance of Seti light upon you for

troubling me with State affairs ! " muttered the King in a sulky tone.

Having thus far exerted himself, he gazed stupidly at Ptahmes, and then his head fell on his chest. The King had been sipping wine during the whole day, and he felt drowsy and heavy.

Seeing the state of Pharaoh, Ptahmes commanded the chamberlain to clear the apartment, and, as he wished no others to see the condition of their Sovereign, he said he would retain one of the singers to remain in case of need ; for this purpose he selected Rachel, and instructed the chamberlain that he should not be disturbed under any pretext whatsoever.

As soon as all the others had withdrawn, he told Rachel to lock the doors and perceiving that Pharaoh was already in a deep sleep, he cautiously approached the couch, and taking from his pocket a bottle, which he uncorked, he held it to the King's nostrils.

" And what have you been able to do ? " he asked, turning to Rachel.

" My lord, I drugged the Prince's jailer, who with one of the dancers lies unconscious in his room by the dungeon, then having secured the keys I freed Prince Seti, who now awaits you in the guard room."

" You are one woman in a thousand," said Ptahmes, " let us then lose no time. You stay here, and neither reply nor open to anyone at the doors," then drawing back the sliding panel which gave entry to the private staircase to the dungeons, he quickly descended to the guard room.

CHAPTER XL

PRINCE SETI'S MARRIAGE

PTAHMES found Prince Seti quietly resting in the guard room and immediately threw himself at the Prince's feet.

"Why, Ptahmes," said the Prince, raising him, "one would think you were glad to see me."

"Ah, my lord, by the Gods, I should think so—each day I have dreaded to hear that the Queen had induced the King to send you the silken cord. Thanks be to Providence her illness has at last given us the opportunity we have so watched for, and I trust, great Prince, that the confinement has not so exhausted you that you will not have strength to carry out our plans."

"Nay, Ptahmes, fear not, I already feel stronger for having a breath of purer air. Ah, how I crave to be in the open. 'Tis more my disposition which is hurt, I feel vindictive and cruel, but that very spirit will make me the more determined to carry out our plans, or fall in the attempt. Say, is everything prepared?"

"Yes, Prince, though some of our arrangements have had to be modified. Pharaoh must for the present remain in the palace, he now lies above unconscious and must instantly be removed to the dungeon; then, having the royal signet, the guard can be changed, and trustworthy troops be stationed throughout the City. The ministers attend early to-morrow in the Judgment

Hall, and you will then be able to take up the reins of Government.

" If your Royal Highness will but assist me to carry the King, we can, with the help of Rachel, instantly commence to hurry on with our plans, for there is not a moment to lose, and I must beg your patience to await explanations till later."

The Prince and Ptahmes rapidly ascended to the King's apartments and, asking Rachel to join them when called, they carried the unconscious monarch to the guard room below, where they soon took off the royal robes, and clothed him in those of Prince Seti, who immediately put on those of the King. Ptahmes then produced a wig, which had been prepared in readiness, and calling Rachel, she so successfully lined the Prince's face and hands, that it was difficult to discern, in spite of his thinness, that he was not the King. Pharaoh was then carried into the dungeon, and chained with the manacles which had lately held his son.

Ascending to the King's apartments a message was immediately sent to the Queen informing her, as the King was indisposed, he wished on no pretext to be disturbed.

Ptahmes, in the meantime, admitted by the garden gate the Guards of Amen, the captain of the troop on duty in the palace was ordered to retire to the barracks, and the temple attendants were given charge of the royal dwelling ; this was explained by the installation of Ptahmes on account of the King's illness, the minister having decided to take up his residence in the palace, till the crisis was over ; he even stopped all traffic, and no entry or exit was allowed without his signed order.

The unconscious soldier in the guard room was

removed: and Nagatey, a thoroughly reliable officer of the Guards of Amen from Thebes, was placed in charge, he being first cautioned that the prisoner was a madman who imagined himself to be the King.

Rachel's first request was, that nothing be taken by the Prince except it be prepared by her own hands, from provisions brought from the temple, for from some dark hints thrown out by the Israelites, she feared his life might be in danger from poison, the reality of her anxiety was so apparent, that Seti and Ptahmes acceded to her wishes, and she made ready a dainty little repast in the inner chambers of Pharaoh's apartments.

Ptahmes, in the meantime, repaired to the Temple, from whence he sent a message to Anu¹, that as many companies of the Guards of Amen as could be spared, be dispatched at once to Memphis, and he also communicated by the same instrument, with all the adjacent cities to command the assistance of as many troops as possible for Memphis, for he knew that the soldiers at present in and around the City were under the influence of Amen-meses, and even those stationed at Zan [Tanis] had, he believed, been tampered with.

While he was thus engaged, Prince Seti, in company with Rachel, was once more enjoying God's fresh air, in the King's private gardens, which besides being perfectly secluded adjoined the royal apartments, and in the privacy of this retreat they sat down to enjoy the cool of the evening breeze.

"How beautifully laid out this little paradise appears," said Rachel taking Seti's arm.

"It seems perfect, yet to my eyes it cannot compare with that which we so loved at Thebes."

"But you must confess this is even more charming."

"Yes, perhaps to an ordinary visitor, but the gardens

at Thebes are to me the sweetest on earth, because there I first learnt to love a maiden named Rachel."

" Oh, Seti, make me not ashamed, let me confess that when I first sought my lord Horus, it was for the purely selfish object of aiding my father. Love, however soon conquered my selfish nature, and I have now learnt that the greatest happiness to be obtained, is by giving pleasure to others. Truly your motto ' Do good and avoid that which is evil and do unto others as you would they should do unto you,' is a higher creed than that taught by our priests."

" Yes, my dear, and far too high for the psalm-singing public, whose religion is mostly outward form, to show their fellow-men how good they are and also to soothe their own consciences. Poor fools, if the Almighty is all-seeing, as they pretend to believe, what hypocrites he must think them, and how he must scorn their self-interest.

" But it was not of religion I wished to talk, but of love, think you, sweet one, that you could entrust me to shelter you for the rest of your life, and that for my sake you would undertake to share the cares of a crown ? "

" Oh, Seti, my lord, and great-hearted one ! Do you forget that it is to a daughter of the degraded Hebrew race, to whom you offer this honour ? "

" Nay, dear one, I fear it is care more than honour which I ask you to accept. Say, for my sake, will you share my troubles with me ? "

Rachel, bending forward, kissed him, and Seti knew he was answered ; and they, as of one thought and one mind, forgetful of the dangers of the present, talked of the future, which they hoped to pass together, each thinking of the happiness of the other ; and the contentment of being together so filled their minds, that they

had forgotten Ptahmes, who on their return they found patiently awaiting their entry.

When they told the Prime Minister that they had determined to be united without further delay, he blessed them, and at Seti's earnest request, he, attended by a few of the higher priests, solemnized their marriage privately in the palace chapel according to the laws of the country.

"But," said Ptahmes, "I trust on some future occasion that a public ceremony may be held, so that all Egypt may rejoice in the marriage of our Prince; and will you wish, Princess, to be also united according to the rites of the Hebrew religion?"

"Nay, my lord, I, like my husband, believe there is but one God, whatever name one may give him, and as we have, through you, implored His blessing on our union, it is enough. It will be our aim to live honestly, striving to do good to all men, and should there be a future life, we shall be no less happy on that account. His God is my God—and my God, the great Creator of the Universe, his God, and to Him we dedicate our lives by trying to do good among our fellows."

And when they retired that night, they gratefully knelt before the Almighty, thanking Him for His mercies, and praying for guidance through the surrounding dangers.

CHAPTER XLI

THE PRINCE ASSUMES THE TITLE OF PHARAOH

IN the morning Rachel arose early, so that she might help Seti with his disguise, and for safety's sake she resumed the rôle of Eli.

Ptahmes was already astir, being greatly troubled by the reports brought to him by messengers ; the whole City was in an uproar, for there was hardly an Egyptian house throughout the City wherein there was not a death, and every evidence pointed this out to be the work of the Israelites, for in their homes nothing of the kind had happened.

Gradually public indignation grew so fierce that multitudes assembled about the palace and demanded to see Pharaoh. Even within the royal residence itself an uproar was growing. Ptahmes, alarmed, sought Seti, and the Prince had hardly entered the audience-chamber, when a crowd of distracted officials presented themselves at the doors.

" What, my lords, is the meaning of this bursting in thus upon me ? " angrily demanded Prince Seti, in a similar tone to his father. " Did I not command that I was not to be disturbed ? "

" Great King : Children lie dead in hundreds throughout the city ; even your palace is full of the dying. Thousands clamour at the gates, and are becoming unruly, for there is hardly an Egyptian home without

death. All join with us, Great Pharaoh, in begging you to send these cursed Hebrews away, before we all perish."

Reseating himself, Seti said, " Speak to them, Ptahmes."

The minister immediately motioned the scared officials back and said, " This intrusion into the very chamber of the King is most unseemly : Go to the Great Hall and we will there listen to your grievances."

He had barely finished speaking than there was a lull in the clamour within the palace. " Make room for the Queen," was being called along the corridors, and could be distinctly heard in the audience-chamber above the wail of the women.

Ptahmes looked at Seti, and Seti at Ptahmes : this was unexpected danger, which had not been provided for, the Queen being supposed to be too ill to leave her apartments. Yet the difficulty must be faced, and that instantly.

Ptahmes who had caught a whisper of the cause said :—

" Royal Pharaoh, prepare yourself for a great blow ; even you yourself have been smitten : your royal son is dead."

" Dead ? Did you say dead ? Oh, this is more than I can bear," and covering his face with his mantle, Seti threw himself on the couch.

By this time the Queen had reached the entrance of the audience chamber, but Ptahmes, casting himself on his face at the doorway before she could enter, said :—

" Oh Queen, Great Pharaoh is beside himself with grief ; I beseech you remain with your women till I can calm him."

" Stand aside, Priest !" she exclaimed sharply :

"it is not at a moment like this, that husband and wife should be kept apart! nor shall his obstinacy be allowed to bring us further affliction ; either you must influence him to immediately thrust out the Israelites, or I, myself, will move to help the people," and passing by Ptahmes she entered, and, kneeling down by the couch, said, pleadingly :—

"Pharaoh, husband, dear Lord, hear me ; our boy is dead and no grief can bring him back again, but oh King, bestir yourself, and at once chase this cursed people from our land ere more misery ensue ! "

Seti groaned.

"Come, be calm, and turn not from your wife in the time of trouble ; let your Queen again see the light of your countenance," and she put her arms gently around him.

Was his disguise sufficient to escape detection ? Seti doubled it ; yet, turning round towards her, he said in a well-feigned voice : "Peace, wife, all shall be as you desire, you are right, this hated nation shall be thrust out, and perhaps thus the curse may be taken off the land."

The Queen gazed earnestly at what she could see of Seti's face, and cried out :—

"Why, my lord, what ails you, that your face is so altered ? What change is this, that you are so wasted away ? Surely, my husband, you must be terribly ill," and she tried to pull his mantle aside.

"Nay, 'tis but grief, my Queen, this blow following my illness has utterly prostrated me, but I will at once issue a decree that the Hebrews be thrust out. Go, rest, while I proceed to the Judgment Hall, where the ministers already await me," and rising he pressed her hand, while with the other he still covered his face, and

murmuring a farewell he left for the Judgment Hall, closely followed by Ptahmes.

Had he escaped suspicion ? There seemed, they both thought, a sound of doubt and surprise in her voice. Would this woman never cease to be a danger ? A cold perspiration broke out on Seti's forehead, and his legs seemed to tremble when he thought how nearly fate had driven him to the brink of destruction. Entering the throne room he at once took his seat, and commanded the gates to be withdrawn, so that it formed an adjunct to the Great Hall : the recent danger had passed for the moment, and he seemed relieved, and with growing confidence thus addressed the people :—

"A great trouble has befallen my people : I am the King, your Shepherd ; my care is to enquire what tends to the good of the country, and free you from all your enemies. Behold ! we have been smitten from within, by those whom we have fed and succoured, and we have not been attacked openly, but by stealth, for they have been so base, as by poison, or some other secret means, to destroy our children, and even to kill our cattle.

"Can any punishment be too great for such crimes ? From the palace to the hut do we mourn, for our royal son has been taken, even like the child of the cowherd.

"I ask then my people ; what can we do with a nation who are more numerous than the fowls of the air ? We cannot kill them, for even now we have more dead than we can bury, and what nation has prisons large enough to hold them ? Therefore I say let us thrust them out, and let them no longer feed upon us. Let them go out unto the wilderness, and there feed upon one another, or perhaps that God will succour them, who they pretend has caused the natural affic-

tions, which we have had to endure on account of the eclipse, and if they worship a God who according to their own testimony brings forth pestilence and famine, and takes pleasure in killing young children, then is he no true God, but a Demon. And they who worship demons are heathens, therefore do we decree that they instantly depart from our country ; they, their sons and their daughters, their cattle and all that belong to them, and woe unto the man among them who may henceforth be found tarrying in our country, for doubtless our own gods are angered that we have allowed this vile race, who reek with the foul disease of leprosy, to tarry so many generations among us. Up, my people, and thrust them out ! for they are an abomination in our sight.

" Ptahmes, our well-beloved minister, will see that our commands are hastily executed for the good of the people. I have spoken. Peace be with you," and immediately the sides of the throne room were closed, and Seti arose and returned to the royal apartments.

CHAPTER XLII

THE FLIGHT FROM THE PALACE

PTAHMES was now chiefly occupied in organizing the departure of the Israelites, and orders were sent to Prince Amen-menes to employ the troops under his command in keeping order on the borders of the land of Goshen ; but, under the pretence of illness, the Prince sent word that he could not leave the City ; and the troops under him refused to depart without their leader. It was impossible to use force, for the Guards of Amen were greatly inferior in number to those under Amen-meses. This was the first sign of mutiny, and Ptahmes was, therefore, reluctantly compelled to send some of his guards to protect the Egyptian property against the depredations of the departing Israelites ; the rest of his men he employed in guarding the Palace, the Temple, and the City gates.

In the meantime, he sent messages to the neighbouring cities, to hurry the march of the expected troops as they passed through their neighbourhood, and many an anxious hour was passed by Seti and himself, in considering what course to pursue should Amen-meses and his troops rise in open revolt, as was daily feared, before the relief they expected could arrive.

Barely had the Israelites departed from the City to join their brethren in Goshen, who it had been arranged should commence their march between 10th and 14th of

Pharmuth,¹ than these fears were verified ; for Amen-meses commenced an open attack at night, on the Temple, and the Palace was also surrounded.

Ptahmes decided personally to superintend the defence of the Temple, for which purpose he left the Palace by a secret way, the entrance to which he shewed Prince Seti, so that he might be able to use it in case of necessity ; the entry to this passage, unknown even to Pharaoh himself, was in the audience room, immediately behind the King's throne, and from this recess, could be plainly heard all that took place within the chamber.

Little did the Prince then imagine how soon he would need to use it. The following morning at daybreak, Rachel was disturbed in her sleep by shouts, groans, the clashing of arms, and a sound as of the tramp of soldiers ; rising quickly to ascertain the cause, she was terrified to find that the whole Palace was in an uproar ; the troops of Amen-meses had forced an entry, and the Guards of Amen were evidently being overpowered. Regaining the bedchamber, she was just in time to see the figure of a woman suddenly emerge from the curtained wall, and with uplifted hand, in which gleamed a blade, she was cautiously approaching the couch on which rested Prince Seti. With a bound, Rachel caught the uplifted arm, and closed with the intruder. Seti, awakened by the struggle, sprang out of bed, and with his powerful arms wrenched the murderer backwards, and, throwing her to the ground, secured the knife. Then to his amazement, he found it was the Queen.

"Has she hurt you ?" he anxiously asked Rachel.

"Nay, nor you either, God be praised !"

"Seti !" exclaimed the Queen in surprise, "then where is Pharaoh ? And who are you ?" she asked, glaring at Rachel. "Unhand me, fools, you are in

my power, my troops have already possession of the palace."

Seti looked enquiringly at Rachel.

"Yes," she said in answer to his look, "it is, alas, too true," and as if to bear evidence of her word, the noise as of armed men could be distinctly heard on the staircase. Rachel ran to bolt the doors and Seti, rising, said :—

"So you have seized the Palace and meant to murder Pharaoh ! A truly loyal Queen ! "

Slowly raising herself, she looked at him scornfully. " You puppet, who ape Pharaoh, what have you done with my royal husband ? "

" I have not murdered him, as you would ! "

" Beware how you anger me, for neither you nor this girl can now escape. Look, by the growing light you can see that I lack not men to do my bidding."

And Prince Seti, following her motion, gave a quick glance out of the window, and perceived that the grounds were full of troops. In that instant, while he took his eyes off her, she darted behind the curtains, and the sharp click of a sliding panel, told them she had escaped.

" Fool ! triple fool that I am ! Why did I not gag and bind her, while I had the chance ? Hurry, Rachel, and get your clothes and any trinkets you may value ; we have not an instant to lose. The Gods alone know what fresh devilment she may not be up to, and when she returns, it will not be alone " ; and gathering up their wearing apparel, he and Rachel hastily gained the entry to the secret passage to the Temple.

This recess, which as before stated was behind the throne in the audience chamber, they found large and commodious, thickly carpeted and padded, so as to render noise imperceptible ; it was furnished with a

couch, table, chairs, writing materials, books, provisions and various wines and spirits. Also water and other necessaries were provided for ; the intention evidently being to make it a secure hiding place, for a considerable space of time if necessary. It was lighted from above, and was moreover properly ventilated. Here they quickly dressed themselves, and it was while thus engaged they heard voices in the audience chamber ; looking out through the small holes introduced in the ornamental frieze, Seti perceived the Queen followed by two men, each of whom carried a silken cord. It was not, therefore, difficult to guess their vocation.

The Queen was evidently furious, for she had thoroughly searched for the two fugitives, but without success ; she then unfastened the sliding panel of the private staircase leading to the dungeons ; and motioning to the men, signifying that she had other work for them to do, she made the sign—" follow me," and in another minute the three figures disappeared down the stairs.

Seeing which, Prince Seti re-entered the audience chamber and securely fastened the bolts of the secret panel, which he luckily understood, thus making sure that the Queen and her assistants would be unable to return by that way.

In the meantime, Lord Ptahmes, who had arrived in safety at the Temple found that in spite of catapults and compressed air guns, by which a deadly cannonade was being continually kept up from the roof, it would be impossible to defend the sacred building for long, against such an overwhelming force ; he, therefore, as soon as it was dusk, gave orders that the priests and attendants should hide themselves in the secret apart-

ments, and commanded the guards if possible to join their comrades who were defending the City walls and gate-houses ; for he was wise enough to know the importance of not risking his own and other lives in a hopeless undertaking. Lord Ptahmes having visited the battlements and urged the captains to make every effort to hold the gate-houses and walls till his return, left the City, for the sanctuary which was situated some distance outside the city walls ; this he reached by means of the subterranean passages ; immediately on his arrival he dispatched messengers on the swiftest dromedaries to hasten on the relief troops.

CHAPTER XLIII

PHARAOH IN PRISON

IT was late in the day following his incarceration, that Pharaoh came to his senses. He lifted his arm—could he be dreaming? No, there was actually a chain. Quickly looking around him, he had no longer any doubt that he, Pharaoh, King of the Double Crown, was in one of the private dungeons and chained to the wall, so that he was left only a few yards in which to turn round. Yes, he knew the place well! For many a score of his enemies he had watched, as they were here tortured or starved to death. He shouted—he swore—but there came no response; Nagatey, who was watching him through the grating, simply smiled. “By Osiris, the fellow is as silly as a monkey, so he imagines himself no less than a king!” Again Pharaoh, furious with rage, shouted and tore frantically at the chains, and at last, worn out and feeling ill and weak from the effects of the drug and his drunkenness, he flung himself on the bed and simply cried hysterically; in time this fit worked itself off, and, becoming more calm, he began to reason the matter out quietly. How did he come to be here, and what could he last remember? He began to retrace his actions—his dinner, the dancing girls and new singer—then suddenly flashed across his mind the question: “If I am here, where is Seti?” Had his son been murdered, or freed? And by whom? The Queen

might certainly be capable of murdering Seti, but not of freeing him, yet again his son might have been placed in another cell, and then he recollects that the last figure he could remember was that of Ptahmes—yes, no doubt, therein lay the solution of the mystery, the priests, perdition take their souls, were at the bottom of it. By Osiris, he would be avenged on the whole set, if he could but get free, and again the walls re-echoed with his shouts; and yet no one knew better than he how small was the chance of his being heard; except in the lodging of the jailer, no soul was likely to be near; there must, he thought, be some one on the watch, some poor devil who hardly had a shekel to call his own. What should he offer him? Ten thousand pieces of gold and land? Ah, that would surely open the gates of any prison house.

"Jailer," he cried in a clear, sharp tone. "Warder!—do you wish to render Pharaoh a service, and be a blessing to your country? If so, answer, for I can make you rich so that you may live in luxury during all the rest of your life. Speak!—do you hear? Answer I say!—Low born dog! Or I will cause you to be skinned in the broiling sun, flies shall feed on you and lay their eggs in your carcase, and gnats and ants suck your blood. You vile scullion! Who put you here to guard me? Answer me!—do you hear?"

But there was no reply—no sound—no movement. Then perhaps he was indeed alone—left to starve to death slowly in the same manner he had carried out his revenge on the chief general of the Libyan army; yea, that man had worn these same manacles, and he, Menenptah, had watched him die in this very dungeon; and he groaned aloud as he thought of the horrors of such a slow lingering death. Then seeing that water

for washing, and several utensils were in the cell, he felt relieved. He surely was only confined during some priestly conspiracy, which would pass ; had they meant to kill him, they would have done so at once, not have kept him here.

At length he heard the welcome sound of footsteps, the heavy bars and locks were undone and a big muscular priest officer of the Guard of Amen entered bringing with him some steaming hot, savoury-smelling food.

"Ah, at last, my friend !" exclaimed Pharaoh. "Did you think to make me have an appetite ? Here, put it down, draw up that table. Dog !—tell me, what all this means ? As I expected, some priestly conspiracy by your dress. Why did you not answer me during all these hours, when you must have heard me from your rooms ? "

But Nagatey simply went on laying the meal, as if he had not been spoken to.

"Do you hear me, dog ? Answer !" cried Pharaoh starting up and seizing Nagatey's arm. "Do you know that I am Pharaoh, the King ? "

"Unhand me, maniac, else I will quickly make you ! You may call yourself 'Pharaoh,' for what I care, but seeing that I have but just this moment witnessed the Great King, surrounded by his courtiers and guards, leave the palace, your story sounds a little improbable. Come, eat up your victuals quickly, man, I care not to stay longer than needs be in this damp hole."

"Fool !" muttered Menenptah, as he sat down to his food, "Pour out some wine."

"Do it yourself !" was the reply, "you'll want me to wash you next !"

"Seen the King, surrounded by his Court ?—Am

I—or is this rascal—mad?" thought Pharaoh. "Hark you, fellow," he said, "if you will set me free, ten thousand golden pieces shall be yours before night, and land will I give you in abundance—or if afraid of the priesthood! and you dare no longer remain in the country—I will procure you thousands of acres wherever you may wish. What dost thou think of my offer? Or perhaps your starved soul desires some fair-faced maiden?—behold you shall have twenty maidens, if you will but carry out my commands."

"Poor fool!" replied Nagatey, "keep me not waiting any longer with your silly chatter, finish the wine they have been good enough to send you, and it may help you to still dream that you are 'Lord of Upper and Lower Egypt,'" saying which he hastily packed the utensils together and went out laughing.

Three days and nights did Pharaoh pass without any further event happening, than the going and coming of his jailer to break the monotony of his present existence. How he craved for a breath of fresh air, or to see another face than that of his muscular custodian, who began to grow jovial at Pharaoh's expense.

"Well, now," said he, "if I had been Pharaoh, I don't think I should have kept those Israelitish knaves so long in the land. However, thank the Gods they are going now."

"What! Going!" exclaimed the King. "Who has dared to give them leave? Here, fool, free me of these chains and I will soon see to this matter."

"Ha! Ha!" laughed Nagatey "and you would doubtless compel them to remain with us?"

"Aye, and grind them beneath my heel, as I have done for many a year."

'Well, you are truly mad, and with dangerous ideas

to wit." Then seeing the humorous side of the incident, he turned towards Menenptah and after making a low obeisance, said :—

" May the Great King live for ever ! let him but trust his humble servant with the royal signet-ring, so that Pharaoh's commands may be given to the officers of the guard."

" Ah ! " exclaimed Menenptah angrily, " So you are the rascal that stole it ! As soon as I regained consciousness, I missed it, and searched the floor near me, as well as the stinking lamp here would permit—but it was gone—proving that it had been stolen. Know you not, dog of a priest, that such a theft means death ! —and once I'm free, I'll see that by torture shall you be made to confess your misdeeds ! "

Nagatey's face clouded with anger ;—that he, a former soldier of Rameses II, who, as a reward for his bravery in the field, had obtained service in the Guard of Amen, and afterwards promotion to be Chief-jailer in the state prisons, should be called a " Thief," thoroughly upset him.

" You evil-minded thing, you ! " he exclaimed, " I've a great mind to have you whipped ; but being only a mad thing, I will let you down lightly ; you shall go to bed supperless, and to-night you shall spend in the dark with half-a-dozen hungry rats to keep you company," and laughing at the thought, he went out, returning in a few minutes, with a wire cage, containing some half-dozen large, squeaking rats. These he let loose, then, turning out the lamp, he left the dungeon, while Menenptah gave shriek after shriek as the vicious rodents scurried around him.

The same night on which the Israelites left, this man's assistant failed to return to his duties at the

appointed time ; hour after hour Nagatey waited, and, feeling tired, he, at last, went to rest with his clothes still on, in the little chamber leading out of the guard room, and had been for some time quietly dozing, when his dog gave a sudden and fierce growl, which instantly awoke him. In a minute he was on his feet, for he heard the locks of the secret panel entrance from the King's private apartments being unfastened ; it might be the Prime Minister, Ptahmes, or even Pharaoh himself ; yet, he had been warned to guard against an attack, and as he looked at the great lead-weighted mace beside him, he felt ready for any emergency ; and the orders which he had received from the great King himself were definite, for he was to allow no one to pass, man or woman, even the Queen or Captain of the guard were not to be spared, if they attempted force.

The second door was now being unlocked, and as Nagatey breathlessly waited, holding his dog on the leash, he saw a female figure appear.

" What could a woman want here ? " he wondered, but when he perceived that she was followed by two powerful negroes, he knew instinctively, by the silken cords they carried, that they were executioners, and he understood but too well their purpose ; but, before they could enter the dungeons, they would have to pass through the guard room, so he quietly waited. When they had reached the landing, the woman approaching Nagatey said :—

" Fellow, lead the way to the dungeons, I have to do with one of your prisoners ! "

" Nay, Madam, no one is allowed to pass, those are the orders I have received even from the great Pharaoh himself."

" That may be, but know that I, who command, am

the Queen. Come, knave, obey quickly, for I do not intend to argue with such as you."

" You may be indeed the Queen, but my orders are absolute ; even the Queen must not pass here."

" Nay, no impudence : I did not come here to be insulted, as you shall soon know ! Seize him, slaves ; and take the keys."

But ere the men could approach, Nagatey had aimed a well-directed blow at one, with the iron mace he had in readiness, and the dog had already seized the other slave by the throat, this man Nagatey also struck with a sweeping blow on the head, which felled him to the ground ; both being now senseless he called off the dog, and, in spite of the Queen's cries and shrieks, he quickly bound her with ropes, and threw her on the floor beside the slaves. These also he firmly secured, and then the jailer sat down and laughed. His dog poking his nose against him he patted ; for had not the faithful animal also done its share in securing the victory ?

" Fool ! you cannot realize that I am really the Queen, or you dare not act thus ; but know, idiot, that your life shall pay for this pleasantry."

" Ah, my lady," replied Nagatey with a smile, " Kings and Queens are cheap here to-day, I have already one poor devil in the dungeons, who, according to his own tale, is no less than Pharaoh himself ! "

" Pharaoh in the dungeons ? Impossible ! "

" Hardly probable, is it ? " said Nagatey, " but we let you be what you like here, and I don't see why you should not be a Queen, if it pleases your fancy, it does no harm to anyone, so you can imagine what you like," and he mounted the private staircase, for he knew his fresh prisoners were well secured, and he determined to make the place safe against any other intrusions, by

fastening the heavy iron bars on the inner side and closing the ponderous iron doors which had been firmly fitted to slide between the enormous blocks of stone in case of assault or siege. This having been done he felt relieved, for he knew Ptahmes, or the King, could, if they wished, communicate with him by means of speaking tubes. He was, however, surprised while he was thus employed to hear an uproar in the King's private apartments, all was usually so orderly, even voices being subdued while in the royal Palace. "However it is not my affair," he thought, as he returned to his own rooms : he had only just reached the landing, when his fellow jailer came hurrying breathlessly along the passage leading from the main entrance to the dungeons.

"Why, sonny, I thought you were lost, and I sorely wanted your assistance a short time back. Say what detained you ? "

"Why, the Palace is in an uproar, I was told that Prince Amen-meses, captain of the bodyguard, has headed an insurrection in favour of the Queen. Our guards have been overpowered, and Pharaoh, they say, has fled."

"But how know you this ?—it may be some joke they are trying to play on your credulity."

"Joke ?—Five hours have I been in hiding, trying to come in by our entrance unseen. And from the terrace I perceived at least a hundred of our guards slaughtered in cold blood. Lord Ptahmes is, I hear, defending the Temple. Believe me, if any of the priesthood fall into Amen-meses' hands, there is not much mercy shewn. Thank the Gods, we are fairly safe here." Then entering the guard room he stopped suddenly.

"Why, who are these ? " he asked.

" Oh, *only* a queen ! At least so she calls herself, and a couple of executioners ! "

" Nonsense ! " replied the man, " I saw the Queen myself not half-an-hour ago, in company with Amenmeses ordering the assault. Come, let us put them in the dungeons, so that I may have something to eat, I'm famished."

The Queen was, therefore, amidst much expostulation and threatening language, carried to one of the dungeons, and the two executioners were put into another. The jailers were far too much occupied about their own affairs to trouble about their prisoners' wounds at present; and they quickly seated themselves at the table and while eating their meal busily commenced talking over the events, which would probably keep them confined to the prison-house, till Lord Ptahmes could regain possession of the Palace; for they never doubted for a moment, but that the Prime Minister would soon quell the insurrection.

CHAPTER XLIV

THE ESCAPE FROM THE CITY

PRINCE SETI and his wife did not stay longer than need be in the secret chamber, but, lighting a lamp which was ready, the Prince led the way down the narrow staircase ; perhaps his thoughts ought to have been occupied in thanking Providence, that, for a time at least, they were both safe from their enemies ; but his mind, for the moment, was trying to solve the mystery of how the Palace had been so suddenly entered by the insurgent troops. Who had been the traitor ? And again how had the Queen been able to escape from her apartments, guarded as she was by a physician from the Temple ? Had this man been drugged and how had she been able to deceive him by pretending to be so much worse than she really was ? All these questions came into his mind as they swiftly descended the stairs, for he felt it was owing to some treachery that they were now having to burrow like rats in a hole to save their lives. How much sooner would he have been fighting in the open ! He who had been accustomed to lead armies and never feared to face his enemies. Yet he had the soothing thought, that he had by him, safe and sound, that treasure, his wife, who was to him of far more worth than palaces or kingdoms.

The underground passage to the Temple seemed interminable ; door after door had to be unfastened by

a separate key, and reclosed ; on the other hand they could breathe freely for the place was well ventilated and being lined with glazed tiles appeared free from damp.

At last, having reached the chamber which formed an entry to the private apartments of the Temple, Seti began gently to draw back the heavy sliding panel, but he almost instantly reclosed it, for on a couch on the opposite side of the room were two figures, a soldier and a Temple attendant : they appeared dishevelled and bloody, and were apparently asleep ; the whole chamber was in disorder, chairs overturned and the floor strewn with broken furniture and ornaments. Carefully listening and hearing no sound, the fugitives again slightly opened the panel and watched—there was still no movement—only an indistinct noise from the direction of the Temple ; not being sure whether the occupants of the couch were asleep, or unconscious, Prince Seti drew his sword and cautiously entered the room but as he approached he perceived that both were dead ; he then quickly searched the other rooms, which he also found in disorder and deserted, except in the entrance passage, where a young attendant lay unconscious. The noise from the Temple could now be distinctly heard, the clash of arms, the shouts of soldiers, and the groans of the dying ; and Seti, looking through the apertures made to enable the priests to survey the interior of the Temple without being seen, perceived that the whole place was in an uproar, the troops of Amen-meses had forced an entry, and though some of the Temple guards were still attempting to give battle, yet so greatly were they outnumbered that they were simply being slaughtered, and the entire building had the appearance of a shambles, for soldiers, priests and attendants lay dead and dying in all directions

Returning to his young wife, the Prince could only tell her that they must seek another way of escape. The entrance from the Temple to these apartments was, however, well concealed, and strongly built, so that they were perfectly safe for the moment. Prince Seti now took the opportunity of discarding his royal robes and putting on the simple costume which he took off the dead attendant, who, it was evident, had only succeeded in killing his opponent by a last dying effort, for even in death he still firmly clasped the dagger, the blade of which was deeply embedded in the soldier's chest.

Rachel, in the meantime, had bathed the wounds of the younger attendant, who, on recovering consciousness, related how the Temple gates had been burst in, and the defenders overwhelmed by the number of the insurgent soldiers.

Lord Ptahmes had left the City by a secret passage, situated at the other side of the Temple, in order to take command of the troops which were hastening from the south. Most of the priests had been able to gain the secret apartments beneath the Temple ; the reciter, however, who usually occupied the rooms they were now in, was still missing ; by his last orders one of the doors had been left unbarred in case of his return, and it was through this entrance the soldier who had killed the Temple attendant had forced his way.

Prince Seti finding that all the other windows and doors were barred and secure, helped the young man to repair the broken panels and thoroughly block up this entrance. Learning that there were plenty of provisions and all other requisites in the rooms, he ordered the lad to remain there in hiding, until, by aid of the expected troops, the priests were once more enabled to regain possession of the Temple.

Rachel, for safety's sake, changed her costume with that of the lad and after partaking of some refreshment, Prince Seti and his wife left the Temple by another secret passage, which had an exit in a northern part of the town.

The Prince had on previous occasions traversed this passage with Ptahmes, but it was so mined with pits and wells and had so many false turnings that Seti was thankful for the plan the Minister had given him, and even then it was an anxious journey each minute fearing some false flooring might be overlooked and give way beneath them.

When they had at length reached the steps leading to the exit, Seti took every precaution to test the landing, for this he knew was but supported by a spring, and beneath was a deep well of water from which there was no escape. To unfasten this last door was by no means an easy task, either the springs had jammed, or owing to its being so little used had rusted ; the Prince, however, at last got sufficient purchase to force it open wide enough for Rachel to pass ; she had no sooner entered than she gave a shout. Seti immediately followed, and found himself face to face with two powerfully-built soldiers. So unexpectedly was he seized that there was no chance of resistance.

The room in which they found themselves was unfurnished and the walls hidden by cupboards which surrounded the entire chamber, at the back of one of these was the secret entrance.

"Ah," cried one of the men, "we've got two, anyhow, and you didn't forget to make noise enough to let us know you were coming."

"Bah!" cried the other, "by the Gods, only two Temple attendants and our captain was hoping to

secure Lord Ptahmes, or at least some of the priests. But we've found out the entrance at any rate."

"And what use is that, if our fellows have, as I hear, already gained possession of the Temple?"

"The entrance to the secret passage is always worth knowing, fool!"

"Fool, yourself!" replied the man angrily, "now, scullions, re-open the door, and guide us back by the way you came, or I'll break your necks."

Prince Seti knew that to show opposition was to risk Rachel's life as well as his own, their only hope of escape was to take instant advantage of any opportunity which might occur, he therefore civilly answered:—

"Willingly, but as you heard, the door is difficult to open."

"Difficult! Bah! I think we'll force it easily enough. You turn the bolts while we give it a shove."

"Humph!" said the other, regarding Seti's intelligent face, "it strikes me we'll have to watch this weasel, the beast has a deal too oily a tongue to please me. Mark you, my beauty," he said, approaching the Prince, "if you or this youngster try and play us false, I'll brain the pair of you as I would rabbits," and at the same time he felt for their weapons, securing two daggers and the Prince's sword, which he threw together into a corner.

"Now cease your jabber," called out his comrade, "come and give a heave at the door, while the Temple fellow undoes the secret lock."

"Not before I've secured these two with a twist of rope," shouted his companion, and in another minute he bound Rachel fast to the cupboard supports and to her he tied Seti, leaving just sufficient freedom to enable him to reach the locks and bolts.

"Now, then, I'm ready," he said as he placed his powerful shoulders against the door; Seti then turned the lock but did not pull back the secret bolts; the men therefore pushed in vain, the door remained fast.

"Ah, you don't put out half enough strength—Why I thought you were strong!" said Seti with a laugh, adding in a low tone to Rachel, "now cling to the cupboards for dear life."

"Ah, the priests know how to fix a door securely."

"Now then heave together," called Seti, and as the men put out all their strength, he suddenly pulled back the bolts. Away flew the door—at the same instant the inside flooring gave way, and two forms shot into the abyss, carrying Seti off his legs and throwing him on to the very brink of the pit. Luckily he had clutched at the cupboard woodwork as he fell, but a heavy weight was threatening to draw him in. A distant splash and gurgle told where one of the soldiers had gone to, but the other had evidently got hold of Seti's garments.

"Hold fast for Heaven's sake!" the Prince cried to Rachel, who was straining her utmost to retain her hold, for she felt that the cord was gradually giving.

In the meantime Seti was kicking with his whole strength endeavouring to free himself from the grip of the soldier. Whether he half stunned him with a blow in the face, he knew not, but there came the sound of the tearing of a fabric, then such a sudden grasp of his sandal that the Prince slipped right over the brink, only retaining hold of the edge by his hands; he gave another violent kick and he was free—but in the effort he lost his hold and was dangling by the cord over the abyss; he heard the soldier's body knock against the sides of the well and fall with a splash into the water

beneath ; then a groan from Rachel told how the strain was trying her, and he knew any second the cord might give way ; quickly hand over hand he drew himself up till he could again grip the flooring, and thus free Rachel from his weight ; for she had been thrown heavily on the boards by the sudden wrench, and had only by a terrible effort been able to retain her hold of the woodwork, and thus save both their lives.

The Prince now managed to raise himself sufficiently to grasp the framework and by this means drew himself gradually up, and in a few minutes he was once more beside his wife.

For a short time they were so exhausted that neither spoke, then Seti, being sufficiently recovered, gently took her in his arms and kissed her, and fetching his sword and the two daggers from the corner, severed the cord which had so providentially saved them. Hearing no noise they went cautiously through the rooms which were poorly but comfortably furnished. Seti hoped to find the care-keepers who he knew were the only occupants, and were dependents of the priesthood.

The house seemed unoccupied, till as they neared the entrance, which was open, Seti saw to his consternation several soldiers chatting in the front yard, and who were approaching the doorway. It was too late to turn back, so telling Rachel to follow him boldly, he walked straight out towards the gateway.

They were, however, immediately accosted by the sergeant in charge.

" Hullo ! " he shouted, " whom have we here ? Where, pray, do you come from ? "

Seti answered without hesitation :—

" From Lord Ptahmes with a message for Prince

Amen-meses ; I was told I might find him here, but no one is within."

" No one within ? Why, I left two men in charge only five minutes ago—but I did not see you enter."

" You seemed occupied, Sir, so I would not disturb you. As Prince Amen-meses is not here, can you tell me where I may hope to find him—as I have an urgent message to deliver ? Lord Ptahmes is prepared to enter into negotiations in order to save further bloodshed."

" I am expecting him, but as he is so long after the time he mentioned, he has doubtless been detained. Will you therefore wait ? "

" Thank you, my orders are implicit, if I was not fortunate enough to find him here, I was to go direct to the barracks," and, with a friendly good-day, Seti and Rachel went out of the gate ; but the fates were not propitious, for no sooner had they reached the pavement than Prince Amen-meses drove up in his chariot to inspect this suspected exit from the Temple, and stepping down from his equipage came face to face with Prince Seti, the one man whom he most hated, and who now, he thought, alone stood between him and the throne ; for he felt certain that the Queen had already rid the land of Pharaoh.

They gave each other but one swift look and Prince Amen-meses instantly shouted :—

" Here, quick, fools, arrest that man ! "

But the Crown Prince was too nimble for them, swinging Amen-meses aside he caught hold of Rachel, bounded into the chariot, and, seizing the reins from the astonished charioteer, lashed the startled horses into a gallop, crushing beneath the wheel a soldier who endeavoured to stop them.

Prince Seti clutching the frightened charioteer by

the arm, while urging the beasts on to their utmost speed, said :—

" Now drive for the northern gate as if your life depended on it—as surely it does—for swerve but a hair's-breadth or lessen the speed and I'll thrust my dagger to the hilt into your body," and he pushed the reins into the man's hands.

The shouts of the soldiers were of no avail, for no one attempted to stop them, and their pursuers were soon lost in the distance ; few were in the streets, the nervous citizens keeping well within their dwellings during the insurrection, and even the furious rate the chariot was travelling appeared but a trifle, after the continued fights in the streets, the riderless horses galloping at random, and the rushing to and fro of the chariots which had continued since daybreak.

Prince Seti drew about his person the gorgeous robe of Prince Amen-meses which had been left in the chariot, and told Rachel to lie beneath the fur rugs which were on the seat ; in the meantime, the horses still galloping at their utmost speed soon approached the northern gate. As the Prince came in sight of the gateway, thinking that the chariot of Amen-meses would be at once recognized, he shouted out and made signs that the gates should be opened, but to his consternation soldiers seemed to be instantly ordered down from the guard-house, and were massing together evidently determined to surround the vehicle. Prince Seti saw at once it would not only be impossible to pass, but escape was out of the question, as a company of cavalry was in readiness to follow them.

Then to his surprise as he neared the gateway, he recognized that they belonged to the Guard of Amen.

The chief archer had seen the royal chariot

approaching, and recognizing the horses and apparel of the Prince Amen-meses, he had instantly determined on his capture, but as he drew near, the chariot having been surrounded, to his surprise he found himself face to face with the Crown Prince.

"Nefu," said the Prince, "the Palace is seized and the Temple taken, but try and hold the gates till my lord Ptahmes can relieve the City. I myself go to collect the guards sent to protect the roads during the passage of the Israelites. See, here is Pharaoh's signet, open the gates."

The captain bowed low and asked the Prince if he would accept an escort, but Seti refused.

"Mind let none pass without Lord Ptahmes' command, remember my orders—Adieu."

The gates were now open and the Prince gave orders to the charioteer to proceed and they re-started at a sharp trot up the northern road. When they were out of sight of the City, the Prince drew a breath of the country air with relief; after his incarceration in the damp dungeon and the subsequent troubles he felt the value of freedom.

CHAPTER XLV

PRINCE SETI FOLLOWS THE ISRAELITES

IT was dusk when the Crown Prince's chariot reached the city of Per-tum,¹ which was garrisoned by the Guards of Amen. The charioteer was ordered to drive straight to the citadel, the commander of which was personally known to Prince Seti.

As the royal chariot drew up before this Captain's lodging, Rachel, being in her costume of male attendant, stepped down and announced that a member of the royal household requested an interview.

As Prince Seti was shown into the Captain's apartments, the officer, instantly recognizing his royal visitor, threw himself at the Prince's feet.

"Arise, Hora, for it is but a fugitive who stands before you, the Queen and Prince Amen-meses have seized the City of Memphis, the walls and gates of which alone remain in our hands, and by this time doubtless even Pharaoh has been murdered.

"The principal cities of the Empire I hear are garrisoned by troops who are entirely under the influence of Prince Amen-meses and I believe, for the present, there is not the slightest prospect of stemming the revolution. Our only hope of safety appears to me to be in joining the Hebrews, who, as you may be aware, are deeply indebted to me for past favours."

Captain Hora¹ could hardly repress a smile as he heard that the Prince expected gratitude from the Hebrews.

"The Israelitish host, Great Prince, must now be nearing Etham, having left this district the day before yesterday, but I would warn your Highness, that a considerable force of rebels under Kaza, a dependent of Prince Amen-meses, has encamped in that locality, and I think he would at once detain you, if you had the misfortune to fall in his hands."

"Why need he know who I am?" replied Prince Seti, "I have, to my knowledge, never met the man; the charioteer, and the royal chariot can remain here and I will travel as a simple messenger from th' Court, moreover, you can provide me with a letter wherein you can demand that we be treated with due respect, which request he will be bound to honour."

"Ah! my Prince, you little know Kaza to couple his name with honour; yet, disguised as you suggest, I do not see why you should not proceed on your way in safety. If your Highness is so fortunate as to pass these troops your next resting place will be the fortress of Migdol at the head of the Bitter Lakes, which castle is in command of Captain Mery, a loyal gentleman, for whom I will give you a letter, he is one of my former comrades and a man in whom, Great Prince, you can place implicit trust."

After a good night's rest, the Crown Prince, dressed as an officer of the guard, and Rachel, disguised as a young soldier, continued their journey in an ordinary war chariot drawn by a pair of the most powerful horses procurable, for the roads on the preceding day had been hardly passable.

Prince Seti marvelled that he had not been already followed by a detachment of horse, and concluded that

some special event, or catastrophe, alone could have prevented Queen Tua and Amen-meses from endeavouring to overtake him.

As they continued their journey, the same devastation marked the route of the Israelites, the whole district through which they had passed having been left desolate, homesteads, where the inhabitants had refused to part with their goods, had been pillaged, the crops trodden down, flocks and herds taken, and even the vineyards on the hill-sides ruthlessly destroyed.

"It is even as if locusts had passed over the land," muttered Seti, for neither he nor Rachel spoke much for fear of causing comment from the driver.

In many places mounted peasants, appeared along the valley, apparently searching the district in hopes of finding their stray cattle, and several times the chariot was stopped to answer questions as to whether lost horses or animals had been passed on the road, these men invariably returned towards the district of Etham, in hopes, thought Seti, of perhaps being able to obtain restitution from the departing Hebrews.

The journey was terribly wearisome, the whole of the valley being reduced to a mud bank, through which it was only with the utmost difficulty that the horses could draw the chariot.

More than once the Prince hesitated whether it would not be better to proceed on foot over the hills or endeavour to journey by boat along the canal—but the men at the locks had fled, and one means seemed as hopeless as another.

On arriving in the vicinity of Atuma [Etham] the late camping-ground of the Israelites was reached; as in their former resting place, refuse and filth had been left on the open ground, without the slightest effort of

burying the litter having been made. Avoiding the polluted locality as much as possible, the Prince hoped to reach the watch tower by a circuitous route, but unexpectedly came upon the encampment of Kaza's troops, which were so distributed that it was impossible to reach the citadel, or even proceed on their journey without passing through a portion of the camp, the outskirts of which were swarming with Bedouins, collected in hopes of trading with the troops, among whom were mingled camp followers of the lowest description.

This General Kaza seemed to have collected together the scum of Egypt, even the soldiers were employing their hours of relaxation in laughing and jesting with the abandoned women who were mostly dancing and drinking with the half-besotted troopers ; others sat round the camp fires, singing coarse or lewd songs or telling yarns of their feats in love and war.

Prince Seti, giving a shudder of disgust, turned the horses' heads, meaning to try by some other route to avoid the encampment and afterwards regain the road ; but he had only proceeded a short distance when the chariot was overtaken by some horse soldiers and he was informed that, owing to the unsettled state of the country, the commandant of the troops had ordered that all travellers must pass through the camp, and give a proper description of themselves and their business before proceeding.

There being no other alternative but to obey, the horses' heads were again turned and they entered the camp.

The evening was now far advanced, and there were already lights in some of the tents ; as the vicinity of the staff was approached more order appeared, though

even here was a laxity, as if the morals and lawlessness of the commander had contaminated the whole force. At the end of the passage left open between the tents, a large square had been kept vacant, and in the centre of this had been pitched the gigantic tent of the general, and several smaller ones for his officers, staff, and attendants. It was here Prince Seti and Rachel were ordered to alight.

This General, Kaza, was a soldier who had risen from the ranks ; his father, a veteran trained in the wars of Rameses the Great, had, during the expeditions against the northern European tribes, taken to wife a fair well-formed Germanic captive ; their son grew to be a handsome, wayward lad, whose chestnut hair and manly figure had, while he was on guard at the palace, attracted the attention of Bakta, Queen Tua's chief tirewoman. To this circumstance alone, he owed his fortune, for through this girl's influence with the Queen, he had been brought to the notice of Amen-meses ; and the young barbarian's fierce reckless nature had found favour with that Prince, whose commands, be they right or wrong, he implicitly obeyed. He was at Tanis when Amen-meses commenced his attempt to seize the throne, and on receiving that Prince's orders, he at once forsook his post, and collecting what troops he could, who were willing to risk fighting for the sake of pillage, marched southward to join the troops under Prince Amen-meses, endeavouring, as he passed the different garrisons, to impress on the commanders the benefits they would derive, if they at once joined the Prince's cause.

Feeling intoxicated by his sudden rise to such importance, being now at the head of several thousand men, he gave up his evenings to luxuriant and riotous

living, and knowing the character of men who had joined his standard, he also allowed them at nights and during the hours of rest, every kind of license, which contrasted strangely with the exacting and cruel discipline he exercised during the hours of duty.

He had now encamped awaiting instructions, as to whether he was to join the Prince at Memphis, or to commence subduing the provinces.

That morning he had by means of carrier pigeons, heard from his mistress at Memphis that the revolt had succeeded and the City was in the hands of Queen Tua and Prince Amen-meses ; the message also stated that Prince Seti, accompanied by a Jewess disguised in male attire, had escaped in a chariot by the northern road, and he fully realized how important it would be, if he could succeed in capturing the Prince ; for although he had never seen Seti sufficiently near to recognize him, there were hundreds of soldiers in the camp who could do so. He had, therefore, at once sent out several of these men disguised as peasants and ordered them to make inquiries for their supposed lost cattle, of any travellers they might meet. Even the soldiers who brought Seti into the camp were selected because they personally knew the Prince. Thus Kaza was perfectly well aware whom he was about to receive, for there was now not the slightest doubt as to the Prince's identity.

It was a positive pleasure to this man's braggart spirit to be able thus to hold the fate of a royal prince in the hollow of his hand—he could insult as he wished one of the reigning house with impunity, and without incurring the slightest risk of a reprimand, for who was to prove that this man was any other than a spy, or some prying traveller, even if the Queen caused inquiries

to be made ; for Kaza knew to his cost the fickle and changeable character of women, and was aware of the Queen's former *penchant* for Prince Seti, but even in the event of a reconciliation he felt perfectly safe, and therefore meant to enjoy to the uttermost his captive's discomfiture.

Kaza, when the Crown Prince was announced, had just dined, several courtesans were lolling around him on rich fur rugs with which the couches were covered, and two dancing girls were executing a licentious dance for their pleasure. As the Prince and Rachel were brought in guarded, Kaza stroked his long well-trimmed beard, and a nasty gleam of devilment lit his steel-grey eyes. He did not interrupt the dance, but kept the fugitives standing till he was disengaged.

" Ha, ha ! the so-called bastard child of a barbaric mother makes the heir of the Pharaohs await his pleasure," and Kaza smiled to himself at the thought.

After the dance was finished he praised the girls on their grace and passed a lewd jest, at which the courtesans laughed—he then took another stoop of wine ere he deigned to notice the fugitives.

" Ah ! " he then said, addressing the chief soldier in charge :—" Whom have we here ? and why am I interrupted during my hours of leisure ? "

The soldier looked surprised at the question, and nearly blurted out :—" Because you ordered me to bring them in, the instant they arrived,"—but the menacing tone in his chief's voice warned him to be cautious how he replied, and he had wit enough to answer the first question only.

" Travellers, my lord, who crave your permission to pass on their way."

" Travellers, ah, say they so ? What account can

you give of yourselves ? Who are you, who travel about in a war chariot arrayed as soldiers ? ”

“ As you see, I am an officer of the guard, this letter from the commander of the citadel of Per-tum, will explain my business,” and the Prince gave the letter to one of the soldiers.

Kaza had the note read to him and after many a “ Ha, ha ! ” accompanied by grunts, as if expressing doubt, he turned to the Crown Prince saying :—

“ I hear you are conveying a message to the Israelites, at least so Captain Hora says he believes. Where is the letter, and by whom is it sent ? ”

“ It is a verbal message from Prince Seti to Moses.”

“ Well it may be so,” said Kaza in a sneering tone, “ but from all appearances I should say you are a liar ! ”

“ How dare you ! ” shouted the Prince, as he started at the insult.

But Kaza took not the slightest notice of the interruption, but continued :—

“ Seeing that Seti is, according to all accounts, in prison for molesting the Queen, you can scarcely blame me for doubting you, and again if your tale is true, the Crown Prince being at enmity with Pharaoh, does it not strike you as a somewhat dangerous undertaking, to be messenger between him and the chief enemy to our nation ? As I before said, everything tends to confirm my first opinion, that you are a mere adventurer ! in fact, I should say by the look of you, doubtless a spy.—And who pray is this youth, who has such a Hebrew appearance ? Surely, he cannot, from his foreign appearance, be a young Egyptian soldier belonging, as his costume proclaims, to Pharaoh’s body-guard ? And why pray does he accompany you ? ”

“ He is my attendant.”

"Ah ! really ? So soldiers cannot now even travel on urgent messages without an attendant ! Truly we live in a luxurious age ! Your explanations are most unsatisfactory, and I may tell you frankly, I don't believe a word of your story."

"You can scarcely discredit Captain Hora's letter," replied the Prince hotly—"My business is urgent and I must ask you to allow me to depart at once without further question."

"Ho ! Ho ! Indeed ? Bring the lad forward," he said to one of the soldiers, then turning to a painted courtesan near him he added, "Now, Ast, what say you to this youth ?—Would he not make a pretty lover for your younger sister ?"

"I think, General, my sister would prefer a little more manly form," replied the girl with a laugh.

"Your name, youngster,—and since when have you been a soldier ?" sharply demanded Kaza.

"My name is Lehcar, and I became a soldier on entering my master's service," replied the girl frankly

"Pshaw ! I don't believe your soldiering goes further than your uniform, both of which ill fit you. And I do not intend to see our profession held up to mockery. Strip him of his borrowed plumes, lads."

"Touch a hair of his head, and you will have the Crown Prince to settle with !" shouted Seti angrily.

"The Crown Prince ?—Tell him, with my compliments, to look after his own hide, and he will have quite enough to do without interfering with me, and my doings.—Off with his things, boys !" he shouted, as the soldiers tore off the uniform from Rachel and disclosed her breasts.

"Ha, ha, ha !—A girl ! By the Gods, I'm not surprised ! A pretty soldier, indeed ! So my man, even

when you travel to deliver messages, you must fain be accompanied by your mistress. I told you you were a liar, and now I have proved it."

"Curse you!" shouted Seti. "You shall pay dearly for this outrage!"

Kaza chuckled, "Gag his mouth, my men," cried he,—"bind him, and I'll have him thrown into one of the dungeons of the citadel—I'll bring your courage down before I've done with you, I'll warrant!" he muttered.

"And the girl?" asked the sergeant.

"I've a great mind to hand her over to you men to make sport of," then looking again at Rachel he hesitated a minute or two, and then added—"She's not a bad-looking wench, and so I'll keep her a bit and bestow her as a prize for the first gallant deed which pleases me," and turning to a young woman near him he said:—

"Thyi, take the girl in your charge," and he continued, speaking to an officer—"Place a couple of your men to exchange guard at this young woman's service, and take this fellow to the watch tower, telling the jailer to see that he is securely lodged in the dungeons. Let him escape and he dies. See to the business yourself; for I shall personally visit the tower, to ascertain if my commands have been attended to," and without further thought on the matter, he commenced to joke with the courtesans.

The Prince, in the meantime, was roughly seized by the arms, and when outside attached by a chain to one of the soldiers, who, with two others under the command of the officer, took their prisoner to the citadel. A cold drenching rain saturated the men before they had left the camp, and the whole party were in none too good a humour by the time they had reached the watch-tower.

CHAPTER XLVI

RACHEL'S DIPLOMACY

THE watch-tower which was built in the centre of the citadel of Etham, served many purposes, the ground floor was used for the lodgings of the custodian and his assistant, beneath were the dungeons, on two upper stories, arms, military requisites, and provisions were kept, in case of emergency, and at the top of the building was the shelter where a watchman was stationed day and night ; from here the inhabitants of the district were given warning in case of fire, the approach of an enemy, or any other event of sufficient importance ; here also were kept numerous pigeons which are extensively used throughout Egypt for carrying messages.

The custodian, an old disabled soldier named " May," had gained this post as a reward for his many feats of bravery during the wars of Rameses the Second ; his wife having died years ago, he left the domestic duties to be carried out by Thyi, his only daughter, a spoilt wayward girl of about eighteen summers, who seemed little to value the tender kindness of her father, or the adoration of his assistant, whose chief ambition was to make her his wife.

Unfortunately for the girl, Etham being a military outpost, troops were continually encamped in the vicinity, and the soldiers, who had little to amuse them in such a wilderness, were only too ready to pass their

time in flirting with such a good-looking wench. Thus her beauty and high spirits soon gained her many admirers ; from whom she invariably chose the richest or highest in position, provided he was agreeable to spend sufficient to satisfy her endless desires. Thus home duties were neglected, and as the girl was thus accustomed to associate with men above her station, she soon began to despise her more humble father and his assistant ; still she kept at home, until, to her misfortune, Kaza quartered his troops at Etham.

On visiting the watch-tower the general's attention had been attracted by her pretty face, and next day he commanded that she should be sent to the camp, to attend on Lady Nefert-ari, one of the most beautiful and reckless of the fashionable women of Tanis, who having become infatuated with the handsome young general, had travelled south with the staff, under the pretence of taking advantage of the military escort as far as Memphis.

The prospect of attending on this famous beauty had pleased the ambitious girl, who hoped that she might thus have an opportunity of studying the manners, and methods by which this renowned woman had gained her reputation and won so many admirers. To Kaza, however, the old custodian's daughter was but another flower to pluck and throw away as soon as his passing passion was satiated. Already, though she had only been a few days in the camp, he had begun to tire of her, and had hardly spoken to her on the evening, when the Crown Prince and Rachel were captured. Lady Nefert-ari's star was once more in the ascendant, though she did not refrain from showing her displeasure, that Kaza had preferred to spend so much time of late in the society of a girl of such inferior birth, position and

intellect, and was highly incensed when she learnt that it was under the pretence of waiting on her, that Kaza had introduced Thyi into the camp.

Lady Nefert-ari had already retired to her own pavilion some time before the arrival of Seti and Rachel, and to Thyi's disgust the great lady had no sooner left the quarters of the staff, than Kaza invited to dinner several common courtesans, who had been travelling south in company with some of the officers, and during the meal many a coarse joke had been passed at her expense ; it was therefore, with a feeling of relief, when she could leave the general's presence under the excuse of taking charge of Rachel, whom she conducted straight to her tent, which was roomy and well furnished. On their arrival she said :—

" You look tired out, and no doubt you have had a fatiguing journey ; you had better bathe yourself, while I order some refreshment ; " and Thyi sent the soldier to see what he could procure from the staff cook ; after the man had left she added :—

" Which do you prefer—to give me your word not to take advantage of my kindness and thus enjoy your freedom—or am I, when I wish to rest, to hand you over to the guard who will treat you as a prisoner ? "

" I am only too thankful to you for giving me the choice," replied Rachel, " and you can rely on my word of implicitly keeping faith with you."

" Swear by the bodies of your ancestors,"¹ said Thyi.

" I swear by them and all I hold most holy."

" I am satisfied," replied the girl, gazing at Rachel's straightforward-looking face.

At this moment the soldier returned from the mess of the staff with an appetising meal, which Rachel gratefully betook of, in the meantime, Thyi lay back

on a canopy watching Rachel ; and, when the girl's appetite seemed appeased, commenced to talk.

" I suppose you fancy Kaza does not know who your lover is ? "

" I should hardly think he would treat him so rudely if he did ! " replied Rachel.

" There you are mistaken, he received a message that the Prince and yourself were on the road, and your chariot was so carefully watched that your escape was rendered impossible. The report is that Pharaoh is dead, the City of Memphis already in the hands of Queen Tua and Amen-meses, and that all Egypt will be promptly subdued."

" And Lord Ptahmes ? Do you think that he will be idle ? "

" I know nothing of Lord Ptahmes, but perhaps he has been killed, as the arrest of the Crown Prince has been ordered."

" It may be true," replied Rachel, " that the Prince's life is at present in danger, but before another moon, even if Ptahmes has lost his life, the priesthood will have raised a sufficient force to put down the insurrection and dominate the country. The Prince has only to insure his safety till the relief forces are assembled, and he will have nothing further to fear."

" You speak with conviction ! "

" I speak from knowledge ! " replied Rachel firmly, " and Kaza will most assuredly pay dearly for the indignity he has heaped upon the Prince."

" And he will most thoroughly deserve it," muttered the girl—" The upstart !—Did you see the women with whom he was jesting at my expense ? How I hate him ! Did you notice the rich jewels they wore, while I, an honest girl, have but these baubles ? "

" You care for jewels ? " exclaimed Rachel, " Why I could give you jewels such as only princes wear if——"

" If what ? " asked Thyi eagerly.

" If you could but save the Prince," said Rachel, watching the girl's face, as she drew from her breast a necklace of gems, which she held up to the light. " Look, this is worth a King's ransom, and shall be yours, if——"

" No, no, you are trying to bribe me," said the girl, stepping back.

" Nay, I call it no bribery asking you to save your Crown Prince, the future ruler of all the land. Think what a chance you have of gaining his gratitude, so that your future might be passed in ease and comfort for the rest of your days."

Thyi sat down on a couch and resting her chin on her hands seemed for a minute or two lost in thought, then turning towards Rachel with a business-like manner she said :—

" And if I have a husband, what then ? "

" He should have a lucrative post."

" And my father ? " added Thyi.

" He would be given an ample pension."

" And if I had children ? " continued the girl.

" They should be also well provided for."

" And who are you, who can promise all this ? " asked Thyi with an air of incredulity.

" His wife, the Crown Princess."

" You swear it ? "

" By my soul."

Again the girl kept quiet, weighing all the chances of success and failure.

Then, starting up, she said :—

" By Osiris, it is worth a trial ; but remember, if we

fail, it means your life and mine ; but I may tell you, I have more chance of success than you might imagine," and the girl walked excitedly two or three times up and down the tent, then again throwing herself on the couch, she added :—

" I must think the matter out—and that necklace, you have promised that also ? "

" Certainly."

" Ye Gods, if I can only succeed,"—she muttered to herself, then going to the entrance of the tent she looked out, it was still pouring with rain, and the sentry without was leaning on his spear, looking wet and wretched.

" Go," she said to him, " and see if the mess tent is still open, and if so, procure a couple of bottles of good wine ; we are cold, and even you look miserable."

" I am wet through," replied the man.

" Then bring a bottle of spirits for yourself," added Thyi, for she had already remarked that his face bore the stamp of an habitual drinker. On his return, handing him the bottle of spirits, she said :—

" If you care to rest in the shelter of the entrance you are at perfect liberty to do so, for there is no reason why you should not pass the night comfortably as the lady has given me her word not to try to escape."

The man bowed and thanked her, the night was dark and he was not on usual sentry duty, therefore no superior would be visiting his post before his comrade relieved him ; he looked at the heavy dark sky and the streaming rain, and a few minutes after was comfortably sheltered in a corner of the entrance ; the spirit was warming and soothing—as the lady said, there was really no reason why he should not rest—was not he ordered to obey her ? As she had wished him to do so, it was even his duty to comply, in fact, now he had the chance,

he would be little less than a fool not to take advantage of her kindness—several long pulls of the bottle followed this determination, and in a short time after, he was in the land of dreams.

As soon as the soldier's heavy snoring convinced Thyi that he was sound asleep, the two girls, enveloped in thick wrappings, left the tent. Thyi seemed to know her way without hesitation, and shortly reached the gateway of the citadel, where, being well known as the daughter of a comrade, she had no difficulty in gaining admittance to the town.

After a friendly word with the gatekeeper, the girls set out again at a brisk pace and soon arrived at the watch-tower, which stood in a large court surrounded by a high stone wall, to which the only access was by a ponderous gateway.

Thyi knocked lustily, but without effect, evidently her father and assistant declined to be disturbed.

Above, the revolving searchlight, worked by hydraulic pressure, kept its usual course, and Thyi in despair began to consider if she could not with Rachel's assistance scale the gates. However, it now became apparent that the inmates had heard them, for a searchlight was thrown on the entrance; drawing back from the shadow of the gate Thyi stood out in the full glare of the light, waving her white kerchief; this last effort had its effect, for in a few minutes, a voice was heard at the other side of the gateway demanding their business, and on Thyi's reply, the great bars were lifted and the gates opened to allow the girls to enter.

CHAPTER XLVII

PRINCE SETI LEAVES ETHAM

KAZA's arrival at Etham, had been a source of great annoyance to "May," the old custodian of the watch-tower, who resented the overbearing manner of the younger man ; but, having received orders from Amen-meses, the commander-in-chief, to carry out Kaza's commands, he was bound to obey one whom he considered a mere upstart, not only inferior to himself as a soldier, but who, for years, had served under him in his own regiment.

These being his feelings, it was with a volley of indignation, that he received the order to send his daughter to the camp, to act as tire-woman to Lady Nefert-ari, who though well born and rich, was not the class of lady he wished his daughter to serve.

Being keeper of the pigeon loft, it fell to his duty to take off the notes conveyed by the birds, and as these were not always in cypher, he often had knowledge of State secrets long before the proper recipients ; thus, he already knew that the Crown Prince was, if possible, to be captured on the road ; and being fully aware that he would not be sent to the common prison to herd with vagrants May had, unknown to Kaza, prepared everything ready for the Prince's reception in the watch-tower ; even the dungeons had been thoroughly cleansed, for the old man had sagacity enough to remember the

fluctuating fortunes of the great, and that though one may be in danger of death to-day, the same individual might be a power in the land on the morrow.

On the soldiers' arrival at the watch tower, the custodian offered to provide dry clothes for their prisoner, but the officer in charge declined to allow any favours to be shown, and insisted that Seti should at once be interred in the lowest dungeon, waiting himself to see his orders executed.

"And have a care, my man, that your prisoner is there in the morning, else death will await you"; after making this comforting remark, he and his men hurried back to the camp.

Whether the captain acted in ignorance of the Prince's personality, it was not wise to enquire, but old May deemed it prudent to wait some considerable time, for fear of a return visit of inspection, before he dared go down to the dungeon.

When he had withdrawn the bolts and by the light of the lantern could discern where the Prince rested, he bowed himself to the ground and said:—

"Great Prince, knowing your personality, I trust you will forgive me, who, being but a simple custodian, am obliged to obey my superiors, and have thus to be a party to your detention, but now that the soldiers have departed for the night, I come to offer you what small comforts my poor lodging affords.

"I have with my own hands prepared a good meal, which you may eat with every safety; dry clothes, a fire and a clean bed await you in the best room we possess, and if there is any other service I can render, you have but to command."

The Prince felt amused, in spite of the desperate situation in which he was placed, and said:—

"But, my honest friend, surely you know that I am no longer in a position to repay your kindness, and that you even incur great risk in offering me this service."

"My reward, Sire, will be your acceptance, and it seems but the first duty of every soldier to risk any danger in the service of his lawful Prince."

"Ah, my man, I am afraid your heart and not your head, guides your actions ; nevertheless, I thankfully accept your hospitality, and if ever I regain my position, you will find that your heart to-night has served you better than if you had practised all the scheming actions of your superiors."

Seti was thankful to leave the unhealthy atmosphere of the dungeon, and to put on dry clothes and partake of the hot though plain meal which the old watchman had prepared.

The Prince had just retired to rest, when a continual knocking at the outer gate alarmed the custodian ; even the Prince was anxious, for it might even be that his instant execution had been decided on. The noise was so incessant, that it being likely to disturb the whole neighbourhood, the Prince decided it would be more prudent to return to the dungeon until May was able to ascertain the cause of this unusual disturbance.

Great was the old man's relief when he found that the midnight visitor was none other than his own daughter, who rapidly related all that had happened since she had been in the camp, and the reason of her sudden return with her companion.

Seti was thankful to quit the cells again and overjoyed to find Rachel had escaped annoyance ; after the Prince had finished his meal, he and Rachel retired for a much-needed rest.

Thyi, however, before following their example,

endeavoured by every means in her power to induce her father to try and give the Prince and Princess their freedom.

"But, child, you know not what you ask," replied the old man. "It means forsaking everything, perhaps even more, for we should probably be caught and be put to death. Pharaoh, it is reported, is dead, and Queen Tua and Prince Amen-meses can only remain in power if they succeed in destroying Prince Seti. It is believed that he intended joining the Hebrews, and if we release him, we shall be in the same position—fugitives. No, my girl, your action would be suicidal, for though I mean to ease their sufferings, yet I do not intend to destroy ourselves in the hope of aiding them."

"But," asked the girl, "if you do not intend to let him escape, how am I to explain my leaving the camp with the Princess?"

"You can easily say you came here to insure her security. Now we must rest, for there will doubtless be much to do in the morning."

A little after dawn, the watchman's assistant saw a pigeon descend into the pigeon court, and at once freeing the note he took it to his chief, who opened it without the slightest hesitation. It was addressed to Kaza and contained only the following words:—

"Our hopes are destroyed, the Queen and Amen-meses are prisoners, and condemned to death. Pharaoh is alive, but Lord Ptahmes retains the power, and an immense army under his command surrounds the city, your only hope is for Prince Seti to intercede for you."

This was indeed joyful news and would no doubt mean the immediate release of the Prince and Rachel, and the old man hurried to acquaint the household.

"There, did I not tell you to wait and see what tomorrow might bring forth?" said the old man to his daughter, "now you will see that Kaza will himself do what he can to serve the Prince," and he quickly started off to the camp.

The general had to be roused, for he was sleeping off the effects of the carouse of the previous night. May therefore waited, for he refused to deliver such an important message to anyone but to the general in person, who, he knew, could not read.

When he was ordered to enter that officer's presence, Kaza received him with a half-drunk nod, and, turning towards him, in an angry tone demanded : "What in the name of Pasht¹ do you mean by disturbing me at so early an hour?" But his dazed eyes twitched and his face became grave as May, at his request, read out the message.

"And the Prince," he asked, "how have you lodged him?"

"The Captain insisted that he should be kept in the lowest dungeon?"

"Damnation!" muttered Kaza, "and the girl?"

"Is the Crown Princess," replied May with a malicious chuckle, "my daughter brought her to the watch-house where she has been well cared for."

"That is a grain of comfort, at any rate. Sound the gong," and as an attendant entered, he ordered his chariot to be immediately put to, and, turning to May, he added :—

"I will follow you as soon as I have broken my fast, in the meantime free the Prince, and show him every courtesy; say it is by my orders, and that I am coming in person to apologize for the mistake."

On May's return to the watch-tower this news gave

fresh life to Seti and Rachel, yet the Prince thought it better policy to press on in order to join the Israelites, till he could obtain a direct communication from Ptahmes, that all was perfectly safe. Pharaoh, his father, was of a revengeful disposition, the message received at the watch-tower, might even be a carefully-laid plot to lull him to security, and thus prevent him from escaping beyond the King's reach.

When Kaza entered the Crown Prince's presence, he immediately threw himself on the ground before him.

"Great Prince," he said, "I have only just learnt your identity, and thinking you but a spy employed by Moses, which your replies seemed to verify, I acted as I considered to be my duty. I trust that in your gracious kindness, you will not resent my behaviour towards you, for my mistake alone is to me a sufficient punishment."

"I wish, at present, to make no comments on the matter, Kaza," replied the Prince, "except that if you really regret your error, I trust you will make what amends are now in your power and immediately place at my disposal the strongest and swiftest horses you can procure, as I wish, if possible, to overtake Moses before he is able to gain the mountains."

Within an hour the Prince and Rachel left the citadel, and finding that Moses had altered his course^{*} and returned southward, the charioteer was ordered to follow by the western head of the gulf in the track of the Israelites.

CHAPTER XLVIII

THE PRINCE'S JOURNEY TO THE RED SEA

As the day advanced, a strong wind arose from the north-east, soon increasing to a hurricane, accompanied by torrents of rain and thunder, so that even the horses became nearly unmanageable, and the roads being full of deep ruts and mire made it difficult to proceed ; no habitation had been seen during the day, but as the evening advanced, Prince Seti, while watching the heavy clouds gather round the mountains, thought he perceived a gleam of light glisten between the trees on one of the nearest hills ; trusting that this might prove that some kind of shelter was at hand, the charioteer was ordered to drive out of the route, untether the horses and leave the vehicle well screened behind the high boulders and brushwood, so that it might be entirely hidden from view ; telling the man to follow, Seti and Rachel hurried up the hillside and after some rough walking discovered a rocky track leading in the direction of the light, which it was eventually found proceeded from the casement of a wooden hut. Their approach was signalled by the baying of hounds, which, when the door of the dwelling was opened, were with difficulty held back by a powerfully-built man, who at once fastened up the dogs and civilly asked what the strangers might require.

“ Shelter for ourselves and for a pair of horses while

the tempest lasts," replied the Prince, " if you can kindly offer it."

The man held open the door for them to enter, saying :—

" You are freely welcome to what poor accommodation I have to give, for the weather is not fit for even a dog to be out in."

The interior consisted of one large room, one end of which was curtained off, and probably served as a sleeping chamber ; two rough tables, some stools and cupboards represented the entire furniture, yet in spite of its bareness, the place looked comfortable for it was clean and tidy, and a huge log fire gave a cheerful appearance to the whole apartment.

In answer to a question, the man informed the Prince that he was a goatherd, and that his wife periodically visited Pi-Kekeret¹ where she disposed of their cheeses and procured what necessaries they required ; as it so happened, she had left home for that purpose the day before, but had not yet returned, her delay being doubtless occasioned by the route being blocked by the Israelitish host, which had been passing since early dawn ; luckily his dwelling had escaped their observation, and he had been careful not even to light a fire until some hours after the last of the stragglers had disappeared. Having no change of raiment the travellers put on what garments their host could supply, while their own wet clothes were being dried ; in the meantime, the driver and the horses arrived and accommodation was made for them in an outhouse ; their host also showed his guests the cool cavern in which the cheeses were made, and pointed out on the hillside the locality of his vineyard, and the land where he cultivated his corn and crops.

"And you do not find such an existence dreary and monotonous?" asked Seti.

"Master," replied the goatherd, "the society of my wife renders me happy, and the attention I have to bestow on my animals, vineyard, and crops, keeps one so occupied, that I have little time to feel dreary. The great blessing is that we have no worry, and as long as we possess health and strength, we hope always to have sufficient for our necessities, besides being able to save a little for our old age. It would be unnatural therefore not to be contented and thankful, seeing that we are freer even than Pharaoh on his throne."

The Prince had therefore an opportunity of learning with how little one can be happy, and how favourably the goatherd's life contrasted with his own existence, which was so full of troubles and danger. The man before him was really king over his own destinies, while he, a prince of the blood royal, was but a puppet to be played with by circumstance.

Their host offered them wine, black bread, cheese and wild duck. They had, however, brought provisions with them, the surplus of which they asked him to accept, as they felt sure of being able to replenish their supply at the fortress, which was now but a few miles distant. Prince Seti, who stood watching the chain lightning play over the landscape, and the trees bend to the fury of the tempest, suddenly during a calm, heard a sound which was to him perfectly familiar. Quickly covering the casement, he listened. Yes, there was no doubt, it was the sharp trot of a detachment of cavalry coming from the direction they had travelled; such a troop would be useless for attacking the Israelites, it must therefore be either an advance of the vanguard of a large body of troops, sent out for that purpose, or,

what was more probable, these soldiers had been sent in pursuit of himself.

Careful watch was therefore kept till after midnight when, as no other troops had passed, and the storm had abated, the Prince considered it would be wise to push on to Migdol * which, according to Hora, captain of Per-tum, was under the governorship of an officer, who would do everything in his power to assist the Prince.

The driver was therefore ordered to descend to the valley with the horses and make ready the chariot ; Seti and Rachel, in the meantime, took leave of their host, who, however, refused their offers of money, telling them that the pleasure of their society had amply repaid any service he might have rendered ; little dreaming of the rank and importance of his visitors.

The fortress of Migdol situated on a slight promontory by the gulf dominated the surrounding flat country for miles, and was soon sighted by the travellers, the formidable walls standing out in clear relief from the adjacent landscape as the lightning from time to time lit up the scene, and, as Seti drove up the higher road to reach the fortress, he saw beneath, the encampment of the Israelites, which not only covered the neighbouring plain, but stretched as far as his eye could see on the shores of the gulf.

On his arrival at the gates, the Prince sent in Captain Hora's letter to the governor, requesting him kindly at once to receive a member of the royal household.

The chariot having been driven into the inner court, the Crown Prince and Rachel alighted and entered the great Hall, while awaiting the arrival of Captain Hora's friend.

The large banqueting hall and adjacent chambers were lavishly decorated and furnished, being often used

by the royal princes when travelling to inspect the outstanding fortresses of the Empire.

The young governor was not long in appearing before his visitors and bowing low, enquired ; " What might be their pleasure ? " then suddenly recognizing that it was the Crown Prince himself, he bowed himself to the ground, while Prince Seti replied :—

" Captain Mery, I crave your hospitality for my wife, and myself, and our beasts, for during such weather we require if possible proper shelter."

The young officer looked at the Prince in amazement and then asked :—

" Did your Highness mention your rank to my people on entering ? "

" No, for the Princess and I are travelling incognito, the charioteer alone might guess, though I believe he thinks we are merely members of the royal household. But why do you ask ? "

" Because, Great Prince, for some cause unknown to me, the King, your father, has issued a decree throughout the land, that no one shall give you shelter under pain of death, and at the same time, a large reward is offered to whosoever shall bring your Highness dead or alive to Memphis."

" Then, Captain, your fortune is made, for the prize has fallen into your hands without the seeking."

" Nay, Great Prince, not so. You may not know it, but I served under you during the Libyan war, and we soldiers do not forget the difference of treatment we experienced under you, to that which we have often suffered under the direct command of Pharaoh. Yet in spite of my wishes I must keep you prisoner."

" Ah ! " exclaimed the Prince, " from the first part of your speech, I thought you must be different from

the usual run of sordid humanity, but I see, Captain, that the precepts of your military training overbalance your boasted gratitude."

"Sire," said the soldier, prostrating himself at the Prince's feet, "you wrong me, it is only for your safety I wish to hold you prisoner. If no one here knows your identity, then, my lord, you are safe, for you can rest in my private apartments, the least likely place for anyone to seek you: in the meantime, I will see that the charioteer has no opportunity of being indiscreet.

"I may tell you that a troop of cavalry was dispatched after you by Kaza, as soon as he received the order, but being unable to overtake you, it is supposed that your Highness has joined the Israelitish host, although Moses denies all knowledge of your arrival. You may thus judge, Sire, that it is not safe for you to travel, neither does the Hebrew camp offer much better security, for I have received notice that Pharaoh, with an army of over two hundred thousand men, will reach here by the southern road early to-morrow, and as the passes north of the gulf are occupied by the troops under Kaza, the Hebrews will be hemmed in on every side."

"But if the King arrives," suggested the Prince, "he will probably lodge in these very apartments."

"Nay, my lord, the officer who was sent here to learn the position of the Hebrews is my intimate friend, and he in confidence informed me, that Pharaoh is so mad with anger that he has sworn not to rest until he has turned back or slain the Israelites—if, therefore, he remains here at all, it will certainly not be for more than a few hours at the most.

"Moses, who knows the country well, evidently intends to try the ford which at certain seasons is very shallow, during several hours, according to the state

of the tide ; and it is to watch this natural entry to our kingdom that this fortress was originally built. If Moses is successful in reaching the mountains, then it is the purest folly for Pharaoh to follow where a few hundred men can keep back and destroy thousands ; then again, how can the King hope, when hemmed in on every side in a wilderness, to find sustenance for such an army, when the surrounding country will have been swept bare by the depredations of over a million people ? You must see, Great Prince, that the hot-headed course of your royal father is sure to end in disaster, and he may then be only too glad to receive the aid of your military skill to extricate him from these difficulties, and thus a reconciliation may be effected. I, therefore, respectfully urge your royal Highness, to wait here patiently, till we learn how far the King's folly will lead him. If the worst comes to the worst, and no reconciliation is arrived at, should you allow such a valuable life to the country, as your own, to be sacrificed without a struggle ? and though I would not have the presumption to urge your Highness to rise against your royal father, yet, surely your first duty is to consider the welfare of the kingdom, and to remember that the priesthood and the army only await your word, to raise you to the throne. At least, Great Prince, wait here quietly, and watch the course of events, before leaving this secure shelter."

The Prince considered that, under the circumstances, this advice was the best to follow, and he and Rachel, therefore, accepted the governor's invitation to stay in his private apartments, being only too thankful once more to be able to sup and rest in ease and comfort.

CHAPTER XLIX

PTAHMES RELEASES PHARAOH

A FEW hours after Prince Seti had escaped for the north, the first contingent of the relief troops commanded by Ptahmes arrived, and during that night and the following day these augmented so rapidly that several thousand chariots, fifty thousand cavalry, and two hundred thousand foot soldiers, were encamped around the city.

The Guards of Amen having successfully prevented the insurgent troops from seizing the gate-houses, the relief forces were enabled to enter the city without loss or molestation.

Amen-meses, hearing of the immense host which had been so quickly collected, and having lost all trace of the Queen, at once determined to give up the contest, and endeavoured to make terms with Ptahmes, but the Prime Minister would grant no conditions, demanding a complete surrender and a full confession of the conspiracy ; he, however, in order to save all further bloodshed, promised Amen-meses his life and those of his officers, if he accepted these terms.

Whereupon Amen-meses and his captains rendered themselves as prisoners, and, having been deprived of their arms, they were marched to the camp without the walls ; the insurgent soldiers being sent in different divisions to join the regular troops.

Thus ended the insurrection.

It was, however, with deep regret, that Ptahmes learnt of the flight of Prince Seti, who he now knew must have lost possession of the Palace, and, being evidently doubtful if relief would arrive in time to insure the safety of Rachel and himself, had fled to join the Israelitish host.

Ptahmes, uncertain as to the fate of Pharaoh, proceeded with a company of guards, to take possession at once of the Palace and Temple. The surroundings of both buildings he found resembled a shambles, so fiercely had the conflict raged.

Communicating with the jailers he ascertained that the dungeons had not been attacked and that the prisoner was alive and well; moreover, a woman and two negro executioners had been secured. Whereupon Ptahmes entered the cells in order to visit Menenptah, who immediately on seeing the minister sprang up.

"At last, treacherous priest," he shouted, "you have come to visit your master!—it is you and you alone, I believe, who are responsible for my imprisonment. And where, Sir, is your obeisance?"

"Peace, madman," replied Ptahmes, "this is not the time to talk of empty ceremonies, but know, it is not to Menenptah to whom I bow, but to Pharaoh—not to the person, but to the dignity of royalty, which you so abused, and which you will no longer enjoy, unless you follow the precepts of your ministers. You rave at being hidden in the dungeon, but had you not been here you would have ceased to exist, for Prince Amen-meses, at the instigation of the Queen, had seized the City, of which it is but an hour since I regained command, thanks to the immense body of troops I was enabled to collect."

"The Queen and the two executioners were only over-powered at the very door of your dungeon, so that your life is entirely due to the precautions of those you deride. Amen-meses is now a prisoner, and I have promised that his life shall be spared, providing he makes a full confession of the Queen's conspiracy."

"You speak as if you labour for my service, and that my safety is now assured—if so, then release me, and I will soon prove if what you state is true. And how is it that the Israelites have been allowed to depart against my orders? Are you, also, responsible for this?"

"Yes, Menenptah,¹ for it was for the good of the country."

"For the good of the country? That, Sir, is for me to decide. Call your men and let them remove these fetters, so that this farce may end. I may yet overtake these cursed Hebrews, and force them to return."

"Nay, Menenptah, matters must now be on a different footing; this empire shall no longer be ruined by your folly, and even supposing you could overtake the Hebrews as you desire, they would probably, ere you could reach them, have gained the mountains; where with a few hundred men, they could, unarmed, easily destroy an armed host whose very numbers would impede their actions. The Israelites could block every pass through which you might attempt to force your way. Moreover, how could you obtain food for your army in a desolate country, already swept clean by the depredations of over a million people?

"Beyond this, the High Priests and Governors have decreed, that if you, Menenptah, do not in future govern wisely, and according to the advice of your ministers, then shall Seti, the Crown Prince, be raised to the throne in your stead."

"In other words, Ptahmes, the government is, henceforth, to be left entirely in the hands of the priesthood, let us call things by their proper names; for how can I arrange terms when I am so completely in your power, and of which, priestlike, you are so ready to take advantage? In future, then, I am but to ape the King, while my lord Ptahmes really governs. In regard to my private wrongs, I, however, demand that I remain my own judge.—When a wife attempts to kill an indulgent husband, and usurps a throne, then she merits death. What is your opinion, Sir Priest?"

"That, Sire, as you justly say, is the law, and for such an offence it is for you to condemn, or condone."

"Then, again," continued Pharaoh, "there is my royal grandson, has he been merely the tool of a designing woman, or has he of his own accord turned traitor? All this must be ascertained.

"Now call your men, that I may leave this noisome atmosphere as quickly as possible, and once more enjoy a breath of fresh air."

Ptahmes felt little reassured at the ready way in which Menenptah accepted his propositions, but, as he had done so, it was for him to fulfil his undertakings, so drawing from his robe a roll of papyrus he handed it to Menenptah.

"And are you aware," demanded Menenptah sharply, "that my signet ring—the emblem of royal power, is missing?—or perhaps such a trifling incident does not interest your priestly mind?"

"The royal signet, Sire, is in safe keeping," replied Ptahmes sternly, "and will remain so, until order and peace are once more fully re-established throughout the Empire; this question and other subjects are fully explained in the document before you.

" This, Sire, contains the terms and the conditions which your Ministers and the Princes and Governors of the Empire demand ; you have but to read it through, and if you approve, affix your signature ; then am I ready to execute your commands."

This did not occupy Menenptah many minutes, and being given a stylus he hurriedly signed the document ; his whole mind being apparently fixed on obtaining his freedom at any price.

Ptahmes then called the jailers, and Menenptah, once more at liberty, was conducted by the minister to the royal apartments, where he found that suitable apparel and other comforts had already been prepared for him.

Having changed his garments, dined and rested, Pharaoh commanded that he should be left alone, so that he might quietly think out the course of action best suited to the critical position in which he found himself placed.

CHAPTER L

THE QUEEN'S DEFENCE

PHARAOH sat for a long time moody and discontented, thinking over the indignities to which he had been subjected, till his anger nearly choked him ; as to the promises wrested from him when he was utterly powerless to object these of course were worthless ; at present he knew he was virtually still a prisoner, the Palace and all its approaches being filled by the Guards of Amen, and even the service was being carried out by Temple attendants ; against him was one of the keenest intellects in the Empire ; yet, Pharaoh believed he had thought out a plan by which he would be able to shake himself free of this yoke, and once more gain that power, which alone made his life sweet. Yes, he would circumvent this cunning priest, who, once in his power, he would have immediately strangled ; and Pharaoh twisted his hands as if the cord was already in his grasp ; and with this determination of regaining his freedom, the King felt a new man, and, after writing rapidly in his tablets, he sounded the gong.

The attendant had hardly received Pharaoh's commands than Ptahmes appeared ; Menenptah did not wait for the Prime Minister to find out his purpose, but voluntarily told Ptahmes his intentions :—

“ I have sent to thank the captains for their rapid marches to the assistance of their King, and have invited

them to the Palace so that I may personally give them my thanks in the presence of the Minister, to whose prompt action I owe my preservation."

Ptahmes listened in surprise, so unlike Menenptah was it to return thanks to anyone; Pharaoh's intellect had evidently reasserted itself, and Ptahmes saw that he had no longer to deal with the half-besotted mind, which he had formerly so easily hypnotised; but with one who would take advantage of him if he could, for the Minister fully realized that Menenptah regarded him as an enemy. Yet, he could make no reasonable excuse for opposing the King's action, and he, at present, saw no reason how so natural a proceeding could harm the state.

Pharaoh then prepared to receive his guests, spending a considerable time at his toilet; in the meantime the officers were served with a sumptuous meal, and, when they had finished, Pharaoh, attended by Lord Ptahmes and several officials, joined them in the judgment hall.

Over a thousand officers were here assembled to greet the King. Menenptah after giving them all a hearty welcome, thanked them in a short manly speech for coming by forced marches so promptly to his aid:—

"It is now for the shepherd to find out what scared his flocks"—continued the King. "Some point to the Queen—but, even if it prove to be the Queen yet judgment shall be passed, for many homes have been rendered desolate, and great grief has been caused throughout the land. I have, therefore, determined that you shall see that punishment, if it be merited, be equally inflicted on the great, as on the lowly."

Pharaoh then commanded that Queen Tua, and the two deaf mutes, be brought before him.

The Queen, in spite of her manacles, walked proudly into the court. She was placed beside the two execu-

tioners, Pharaoh wishing to show that the guilty, be they princes or slaves, would be treated in the same manner, and judged by the same law. The King, as he watched the Queen, had a cruel smile on his lips: was thinking, that with all her pride, it was but for him to raise his hand and she died.

" What defence have you to offer to the charge which Ptahmes, our Minister, brings against you ? You and Prince Amen-meses are accused of exciting a rebellion with the intention of seizing the throne, and you personally were arrested in the very act of leading these two executioners to take my life ? "

The Queen, without hesitation or confusion, replied :—

" Such a charge, Great King, is quickly disposed of by telling the truth. It can readily be proved that your son, Prince Seti, and Lord Ptahmes seized your august person ; of this, Great Sovereign, you yourself, have had sufficient evidence ; when this became known to me, I prevailed on your loyal grandson, Prince Amen-meses, to surround the Palace, and though your troops were repulsed with great loss, yet the Prince and his brave soldiers finally gained possession of the building by my aid, for although I was unable to discover where you had been imprisoned, I succeeded in unmasking that arch-traitor your son, who, arrayed in your royal robes, was disguised to represent your sacred person, so as not only to usurp your power, but, for the time, to delude the people regarding your safety.

" I, however, with only the help of these two mutes, attempted to capture him and his mistress, a Hebrew girl, and believing they had fled to the secret dungeons, where I thought perhaps you also might be hidden, we were proceeding to search the cells when, unfortunately, we were overpowered, and have been imprisoned ever since.

"It is for you, Dread Sovereign, to judge if your handmaiden and these two slaves deserve punishment for attempting, at the risk of our lives, to rescue our Lord and Master."

"Can this be true?" asked Pharaoh in astonishment.

"Ask the mutes, with whom I have since had no communication. Where, if it is not true, is your son Prince Seti, and why has he fled?"

"Yes," muttered Pharaoh, "I left him in prison, and this is evidently his revenge. Even my jailers were priests, and by the Temple guards have my soldiers been massacred!" Looking round, he called upon Lord Ptahmes to step forward. But the Minister, seeing how artfully the Queen was turning the case against him, and knowing the jealous hatred of Pharaoh, and how readily the King would use this to his detriment, had quietly withdrawn. When this was discovered, Menenptah turning to his captains said:—

"Before we can decide this matter, we must hear the evidence of my grandson, Amen-meses. We will therefore proceed to the camp, and at the same time render our thanks personally to the soldiers for their zeal."

"Let the Queen's chariot be also prepared, and until we have stronger evidence, let all honour be shown to her, for it appears we owe her not only thanks, but reparation."

He commanded that the executioners should also follow.

Pharaoh, having ordered his chariot to be made ready, sent for the additional garments which he had had packed before he left his private apartments; for, already, when he was changing his attire, he had determined to leave the Palace, until he was once more master of his own actions; and, knowing that the

guards and attendants at present in the building were absolutely under the Prime Minister's control, he thought it wiser to drive direct from the judgment hall to the camp, for, once severed from his officers, there was no knowing where the audacity of Ptahmes might not lead—perhaps if he had the opportunity, the Minister might even again imprison him. At present, he felt safe, and again sent for Ptahmes to attend him. The chief steward returned with the messenger and explained that Lord Ptahmes had had to leave the Palace on urgent business and sent his humble excuses to the King ; at the same time the steward informed his Majesty that he had prepared a dainty repast which could be taken before the King started for the camp.

Pharaoh, being suspicious, carefully watched the man while he was speaking, but could detect no hesitation or nervousness ; yet he considered it was safer not again to venture into his apartments, for here among his officers the King felt his person was safe and that he was once more master of the situation, and as he drove from the Palace it was with a feeling of satisfaction at having outwitted Ptahmes. As to these excuses of the Queen, they were probably false, yet now he had regained his freedom, it mattered little, though had he delayed her defence, Ptahmes would probably have attended him to the camp, where Pharaoh, surrounded by his army, would quickly have made an end of him. As it was, while the supple Minister was free, there was no knowing what devilment the man might not be hatching.

There was great rejoicing throughout Memphis now that order was restored, for once more the citizens could open their places of business, and even Pharaoh and peace, were preferable to the fearful anarchy that had so lately reigned.

CHAPTER LI

PHARAOH VISITS THE CAMP

ALTHOUGH Pharaoh smiled and bowed as he passed the cheering crowds of citizens, his mind was occupied with other matters. An army of over two hundred and fifty thousand men was ready to march and he learnt that it was only a day-and-a-half since the Israelites had started from the land of Goshen, travelling by way of Per-tum, Etham and the gulf. If, as Ptahmes asserted, these Hebrews, instead of going, as they pretended, into the wilderness for three days in order to worship their God, really intended never to return, then not only would the public works suffer, but thousands of Egyptian householders would be deprived of their slaves : all these would willingly pay a considerable sum for their restoration, and the amount would greatly augment the royal coffers which were at an exceedingly low ebb ; besides, had not he, Pharaoh, forbidden their departure, knowing that if they were once given freedom, even for a short period, there would be no dependence on their returning to their labours ; moreover, if he allowed his commands to be thus disobeyed, his power would be gone. Once the Israelites reached the mountains, Ptahmes had warned him that they would be their own masters, therefore what he decided to do must be done quickly.

Menenptah's further reflections were interrupted by

his arrival at the camp, where cheer after cheer greeted him as his chariot passed by the tents, a swift messenger having given the soldiers notice that the King was coming to thank them in person.

Pharaoh having rapidly driven through the camp retired to the tent, which had been quickly prepared for his reception. He then commanded that Prince Amen-meses and the two executioners should be brought before him ; to these latter he ordered that the cords of office be restored, and that all other persons should retire.

Amen-meses, in the short time the mutes were with him, had already learnt that the Queen was at liberty, therefore their conspiracy could not have been discovered, he also remembered that during the time when he had gained possession of the Palace, the Queen had acquainted him with the surprising information, that Prince Seti, disguised as Pharaoh, was usurping his father's throne, and he recalled how shortly afterwards he had encountered the Prince fleeing for his life : concerning Pharaoh he knew nothing, and, while prostrating himself before Menenptah, he decided therefore to frame his replies in accordance with the King's words.

"Rise, Amen-meses," said Pharaoh, "and inform me how it comes that you are charged with using the troops entrusted to your command to massacre my people ; thousands of lives have been destroyed by your action, and you have even attacked the holy Temple, as well as my royal Palace, slaughtering the sacred legion of Amen who guarded them, even though they were under the command of the Prime Minister himself ? Moreover I hear the sacred Apis¹ has been wounded. What have you to say in your defence ? I, myself, see no reason

why you should not be instantly executed as a warning to those who would take advantage of the powers entrusted to them."

Amen-meses grew livid, this was so unexpected—it seemed that the King was determined to take advantage of his position and had decided to destroy him.

"But, Sire, Lord Ptahmes promised, when I surrendered, that the lives of my officers and myself should be spared."

"Ptahmes ! What have his promises to do with me ? Come, your defence or——" and Pharaoh turned as if he would give an order to the executioners, but Amen-meses instantly threw himself down at Pharaoh's feet.

"Great King," he cried, "may you live for ever ! Am I to be punished for trying to rescue your Majesty ? Is this the justice of the Great Pharaoh ?" then remembering the Queen's information, he added, "Let the Queen herself bear witness that I simply aided her when another was usurping your royal throne. Was it not therefore my duty to oppose those who were upholding such a conspiracy ?"

"You mean Ptahmes ?"

"Yes, Great Pharaoh, he guarded the Palace while my treacherous father, Prince Seti, ruled in your stead."

"Pshaw ! Cannot you tell some more likely a tale ? What did Ptahmes do as soon as he had defeated your troops, but immediately release me ? No—it seems far more probable that you yourself were trying to usurp the throne, and were opposed by the Prime Minister," and Pharaoh again made a motion as if he intended to give a command to the executioners.

"Nay, hear me, hear me, great Son of Ré ! Have mercy !"

"And if I do?" said Pharaoh with a sneer, "what guarantee have I that you may not once more conspire against me?—Nay, to trust you again would be madness," and he gave a turn of the hand, which the mute slaves well understood; one seized their prisoner and the other with a swift movement slipped a cord round the Prince's throat, and the next second the eyes of Amen-meses were nearly protruding from his head—Pharaoh raised his hand—the cord was instantly relaxed and the Prince, half unconscious, was held up between the two negroes to recover himself.

Meanwhile Menenptah watched his victim revive, his cunning eyes and thin curling lips having an expression of satisfaction at having made a human being suffer.

"And if I did but grant you your life, tell me, what would you do?"

"Spare me! Spare me!" gasped the despairing Prince, "and I will do anything."

"On account of our relationship I have a mind to give you another chance, but, remember, the slightest disloyalty and you die."

"Great King, may Osiris bless you. Oh, Lord of the Diadem of the Vulture and the Snake, may you live forever!"

"Rise!" said Menenptah, and making a sign to the deaf mutes, they retired and the royal relatives were alone. But what a contrast! Pharaoh, bloated and half blind, lounging comfortably on a couch covered with rich furs: Amen-meses, handsome, intellectual, though of such a treacherous nature, standing in irons, trembling with suspense and the shock which he had just undergone; he who had braved many a battle, could ill stand against the torture of strangulation or the prospects of passing the rest of his life in a noisome

dungeon ; his spirit for the moment was broken, his nerve gone, and the man was haggard and ill.

"Yes," continued Menenptah, "I will give you one more trial, you shall be restored to your command, in fact for the time being, I will give you the position of Commander-in-Chief of all the forces here assembled, provided you can do but one thing."

"And that—Great King ? "

"Bring back the Israelites—and if you fail—you die. An army of two hundred and fifty thousand men are here encamped and by the shorter route of the southern road we may yet overtake them before they reach the mountains."

"I will do my best, great Pharaoh, no man can do more."

Pharaoh then summoned his attendants, and ordered that the prisoner's irons be removed and whilst Prince Amen-meses was re-attiring himself the King commanded that the chief officers should attend him, and he thus addressed them :—

"This morning I thanked you for hastening so quickly to your Sovereign's aid, and now I call you to come with equal promptitude to the assistance of your country.

"During the time I was confined, a great error of judgment was committed ; I refer to the Hebrew slaves being given their freedom. Not only were they heavily indebted to the State for sustenance, advanced in spite of their sluggish work, but thousands of them were private slaves, who have deserted without redeeming their purchase money ; these in a few days will be beyond recall, unless you, my captains, can overtake them and drive the rebels back before they reach the mountains.

" This blow to the country is the fault of my treacherous son, Seti, who upheld by the scheming minister, Lord Ptahmes, usurped my throne and violated all sacred rights, by imprisoning me, his sovereign and father.

" It now appears that Prince Amen-meses, at the earnest request of the Queen, attacked the royal palace and the holy sanctuary of Ptah in the hope of rescuing me, believing that I was confined in one of these buildings, and it was while attempting this gallant work, that they were overpowered and imprisoned.

" I, ignorant of these facts, was, as you are aware, on the eve of sentencing them to death, and now it is for me to do what every honest man among you must wish, namely to make them what reparation is in my power. The Queen, I have restored to favour, and on Prince Amen-meses, who is the only member of the royal family here present, I have bestowed the honorary position of Commander-in-Chief of this gallant army here assembled, for I, owing to my infirmities, am, unfortunately, no longer able to take an active part among you, though I and the Queen shall accompany you, in order to have the gratification of seeing you turn back these dastardly deserters. On our return we will hold a festival, and each soldier among you, shall, according to his rank, share in the spoil which I hear these Hebrews have purloined.

" A great reward shall also be bestowed on whosoever shall capture, living or dead, our treacherous son, Prince Seti, or the conspiring Minister, Ptahmes, third prophet of Ammon ; for not only is it to them the late conspiracy is due, but they alone are responsible for the desertion of these Hebrews.

" I rely on every one among you to do your best to

hasten your men in overtaking these ungrateful slaves, so that you may merit the thanks of your sovereign and the gratitude of your country—I have spoken."

And the captains bowed themselves to the ground and returned to their tents to make ready for a hasty departure.

A large body of cavalry set off immediately, in order to occupy all the passes at the head of the gulf, and thus stop the Hebrews from gaining the mountains, and a few hours afterwards the entire army followed, excepting the chariots, of which Amen-meses took with him only six hundred, on account of the narrow and rocky character of the roads, and the deep plains of sand, which had to be traversed.

With the forces travelled Pharaoh and the Queen, the King ordering that numerous waggons for the commissariat department should follow as quickly as possible.

CHAPTER LII

THE RED SEA

WHEN Prince Seti awoke on the morning following his arrival at the fortress of Migdol, and looked out of the casements of the lofty tower on to the surrounding landscape, he found to his astonishment that the Israelitish host was no longer encamped on the plain. The tide had receded an almost incredible distance, so that the crested waves were only just visible towards the south-east, where they seemed to be fighting against the strength of the north-eastern gale. On the vast sands, left dry by the receding sea,¹ a moving mass could be distinguished, which the Prince concluded must be the departing Hebrews.

Not wishing to disturb the Princess, overtired, as she was, from her late fatiguing journey, he hastily dressed, and sought Captain Mery, the young commander, whom he found in an adjoining apartment, also watching the movements of the Israelites. In answer to a query from Prince Seti, he said :—

“ Moses, Great Prince, having stayed for years in this district, has been able to judge the fittest time for the crossing, but never have I known the ebb to be so favourable, no doubt owing to the strong north wind which is still blowing.

“ With the first streak of dawn the passage was commenced and as you may see the last section of the

Hebrew host has now little more than a mile to travel ere the other side of the Red Sea will be reached."

The Prince and Rachel were finishing their morning meal when the sound of martial music was heard from the direction of the southern road, and shortly afterwards the vanguard of Pharaoh's army descended into the valley.

The young captain, who was in attendance on the Prince, became uneasy, as the force instead of preparing to encamp on the plain, hastened towards the shore as if they intended crossing the sands, which, owing to the inflowing tide would, he thought, now be no longer possible. He therefore at once sent a mounted messenger to inform the King of the danger, but evidently no heed was taken of the warning, as the trumpets sounded an advance and the entire force hastened towards the gulf, followed by the chariots and heavy wheeled waggons.

Although the returning messenger assured the young commander that Lord Amen-em-an, the captain of the chariots, had himself pointed out the danger to Pharaoh, yet the orders remained unchanged : therefore Captain Mery being determined to do everything in his power to prevent such a risk being incurred, rode quickly to where some of the staff were giving instructions regarding the baggage, and earnestly prayed them to again bring to Pharaoh's notice, how appalling would be the disaster, if the tide returned before they could reach the opposite shore.

But Pharaoh having sighted the Israelites, refused to be balked of his prey, and ordered that not an instant should be lost when the fugitives were so nearly over-taken.

As the young captain was still urging the officers, that they should insist on the troops being recalled, the royal chariot was driven swiftly towards the shore, and

the King, from his attitude, was evidently commanding the charioteer to increase his horses' speed to the utmost, so that he, Menenptah, might be enabled personally to urge on the troops.

Following Pharaoh's equipage rode the royal body-guard, the flower of the army, all picked men, who, with their glittering armour, waving plumes, and mounted on high-spirited steeds, made an imposing array, and as troop after troop of this famous regiment passed, the young commander could not help feeling proud to think they were his countrymen.

On his return to the fortress he watched the great army hastening after the retreating Hebrews, across the vast plain of dry sand left by the receded tide, and fervently hoped that it might yet be possible for the troops to reach the opposite side in safety, yet so uneasy did he feel, that he ordered all boats and ropes to be made ready in case of need.

The Prince and Princess were also anxiously watching the departing Egyptian host, which had hardly reached the sand banks, with which the centre of the gulf was covered, when Prince Seti perceived that the waters were already flowing quickly back along the shores of the bay towards the head of the gulf, where they would soon meet and encircle the unsuspecting Egyptians. Again Captain Mery started out, and with his men tried to signal and attract the attention of the imperilled soldiers, but all in vain, for not even the roar of the approaching breakers from the south could be heard, owing to the noise of the gale. In the excitement of the chase their danger was entirely unperceived until after crossing the sand banks the soldiers suddenly became aware that a mile of turbulent sea separated them from the shore they were wishing to reach.

The captains were immediately ordered to march along these sand banks towards the north, but as far as the eye could see the broad expanse of foaming waters encompassed them.

When the peril of the situation dawned upon the men and they saw that they were no longer able to advance or retreat, and the roar of the billows plainly told them that the sea was fast approaching from the south, the movement northwards no longer continued to be a hurried march, but became a frantic rush in which thousands were trampled under foot, discipline was at an end, and many near the water endeavoured to save themselves by swimming, though few succeeded in reaching the shore ; the howling of the wind, the curses of the men, and the increasing roar of the approaching water rendered all commands inaudible. Horse soldiers who had ridden towards the head of the gulf returned to say that a deep lake² impeded their progress and that the sea was now encroaching on every side so that the sand banks would soon be under water. As the mighty billows thundered against the men, further and further back they pressed and those behind while frantically fighting for their lives, spread a panic among the horses, thousands of which dashed wildly through the struggling mass of humanity : even the charioteers were unable any longer to control their steeds and a stampede took place, the chariots mowing down all before them. Hemmed now in on every side by the sea, the struggling and terrified soldiers had given up hope, when they thankfully saw boats approaching to their rescue, but in their mad efforts to escape these were not only soon overcrowded, but in most cases swamped by so many clinging to the sides in the hope of being saved

When the waters met, the roar of the breakers ceased, but the chaos became still more frightful, men and horses fighting in despair for their lives, and the gale being still so terrific, few had strength to fight the surging waves and swim ashore. Mass after mass of struggling humanity disappeared beneath the waters until nothing could be seen of the countless thousands who had formed so gallant-a-looking army.

A few boats full of half-drowned men and some hundreds of riderless horses on the shores, were all that had escaped the terrible catastrophe.

The sea gave no sight of what it hid, and all around looked as it had done day by day, during many a thousand years, the sea birds skimmed the crested waves, making their shrill noise as if enjoying the gale, and the sun again threw its beams over the large expanse of waters, as if searching to see if anything else remained of Pharaoh and all his army.

Prince Seti, who had been watching the scene from the fortress, seemed dazed with what he had just witnessed, and at the thought of the awful sufferings which had been caused by the stubborn will of a selfish man, and what mourning there would be throughout the land of Khem.

"And had not my lord the King better at once return to Memphis?" were the words which aroused Seti from his mournful thoughts, and looking round he saw Captain Mery standing before him. Yes, it was true!—only too true. He, Seti, was now "Lord of the Two Diadems: King of the North and the South." And with a sigh he arose, and telling Captain Mery to await instructions, he sought his wife, who also was overcome with the appalling calamity she had just witnessed.

CHAPTER LIII

THE NARRATIVE OF PTAHMES CONTINUED— PRINCE SETI RETURNS TO MEMPHIS

LEAVING only a few men at the fortress in charge of the rescued, Captain Mery collected as many soldiers as possible in order to form an escort, and having carefully selected their horses, he and his little troop accompanied King Seti and his consort, by the southern road to Memphis, which city, by carefully husbanding the horses, they reached in about eighteen hours.

Some little difficulty was experienced at the gates where an almost successful attempt was made in arresting Seti, which, according to Menenptah's orders, was to be carried out if he attempted to return to Memphis, and high promotion had been promised to any soldiers who could accomplish this. It was therefore not surprising that the guards at the gate refused to listen to explanation or reason, and a severe tussle took place, in which several on both sides were wounded ; matters might have become more serious as the gate guards were sending for assistance, if an officer had not ridden up, who knowing the King's signet ring, which Seti had fortunately been able to retain, he, bowing before it, at once gave orders that the troop should be allowed to pass.

It being early dawn, the streets were comparatively empty, and the travellers arrived at the Temple without

further trouble, but there the gate keepers would neither recognize Pharaoh's signet ring nor be satisfied with any explanations whatever ; two priests had to be roused who were intimately acquainted with the Prince before the little party were allowed within the sacred precincts.

I, Ptahmes, against whom the royal warrant of arrest was still in force, had taken refuge in the sanctuary, and owing to the gales or some mishap, the carrier pigeon sent had not arrived, therefore no news of the catastrophe had as yet reached the City.

On Seti's arrival, I immediately issued a proclamation announcing Menenptah's untimely end and the succession of Seti II. Copies were at once dispatched to all the principal centres of the Empire and as soon as sufficient troops could be collected to insure order in the City being maintained, Pharaoh and the Queen left the Temple to reside at the Palace.

Among those who were saved was Prince Amen-meses, who, as soon as possible, joined Kaza, whom he urged to rebel, but that general seeing the hopelessness of so doing, not only refused, but acquainted Pharaoh with the Prince's designs ; the result being that both Amen-meses and his mother, Queen Takhat, were banished.

When the bodies of Menenptah and Queen Tua were recovered from the Red Sea, they were taken to Thebes, and, after being prepared for the tomb, were interred with all the honours due to royalty, in the sepulchre built by Menenptah.¹

Great were the rejoicings at the coronation of Seti II, who being a patron of art and literature,² the festival³ has been most fully described by better pens than mine ; the ceremony which interested me far more was

the public marriage of Pharaoh with his faithful wife Rachel, the disparity of their years being hardly perceptible, for happiness made the King appear but half his age.⁴

As Seti and his royal consort left the sanctuary of Ammon to sail for Tanis, which city he chose for his residence, the Queen presented me with a magnificent bracelet, which had formerly belonged to Amenophis III, and was one of the rich jewels given to her by her father, Isaac, and to my wife she gave the ancient necklace which had been found on her neck when saved from the boating accident, and which had been the cause of so much anxiety and trouble ; these two jewels are now among our most valued possessions.

The King ordered a temple to be erected in his memory at Karnac⁵ at the spot where he had had the good fortune first to see Rachel, and he also commanded me to raise a memorial temple on the western side of Thebes ; beyond this he allowed little to be spent on public buildings—much of the priestly revenue, formerly used in ceremonials and for the maintenance of priests, who passed their time in prayers and sacrifices, was suppressed, these funds being used for the support of those who studied medicine and the curing of those diseases which are, unfortunately, so prevalent in our land.

Seti II, besides being a patron of literature and art, encouraged the manufacturers and helped all classes of agriculturists. His government was temperate, especially towards the poor, but he put down acts of violence, oppression and usury with a firm hand, making the guilty suffer corporal punishment and imprisonment, without the option of a fine ; he was also equally severe on those who spread lies and slanders, wishing to promote good will between all men.

No happier household could have existed than that of the King, had it not been for the Queen's failing health and the constant intrigues fostered by Amen-meses and by Iaira,⁶ an illegitimate child of one of Rameses' sons, this man, who was, as I have before stated, formerly a High Priest of Ptah at Memphis, called himself "heir in the house of Sibu, and hereditary prince of the two lands."

When the gods decreed to deprive the good King Seti of his loving wife Rachel, she, when dying, begged the Princess Tausert to watch over the King, and this constant companionship in the end, brought about what Rachel desired, namely King Seti's marriage with Princess Tausert, "the lady of the two lands," who now became "the great royal wife"; but alas, no children came from their union; and the King's mild and peaceful rule gave fresh opportunities for the intrigues of Amen-meses, who at last succeeded in murdering Pharaoh in his palace.⁷

If the good one tries to do in this world is a passport for happiness in the next, then should the gentle King Seti live happily with Osiris for ever.

Luckily for Queen Tausert, I was at Zan [Tanis] at the time of this tragedy, and enabled her to escape to the quay, where the royal yacht was fortunately stationed; we at once put to sea and for a year remained abroad, visiting the courts of King Priam at Troy, and the Assyrian Empire. We also visited the beautiful "green islands" (the Grecian Archipelago). During all this time we kept up constant correspondence with "Bai" who at last, with the assistance of the late King's namesake, Seti, Prince of Kush, succeeded in dethroning the usurper Amen-meses, who lost his life in the struggle. The Queen on her return to Egypt,

however, graciously permitted the body of Amen-meses to be interred in the tomb he had prepared for himself at Thebes,⁸ for on his mother's side he was of royal descent, and in her memory he had already therein engraved her name and royal titles, as he had also had commanded to be added to the statue of King Seti at Zan [Tanis].⁹

Excepting the state procession at Abydos and another in the Temple of Qurneh, at Thebes, there is little to recall the memory of Amen-meses or of his Queen Bakt-urnuro.

In person this king followed his mother,¹⁰ being extremely handsome, his face, however, was disfigured by the same cruel-looking mouth, which in her latter years, so spoilt the good looks of Queen Takhat; in character he was arrogant and selfish, which was perhaps partly owing to his unfortunate position, and the temperament he may have inherited from his parents.

Feeling on my return to Egypt, in attendance to Queen Tausert, that my increasing years now entitled me to a certain amount of rest, I urged that I should withdraw from the cares of government and consecrate my remaining years to the peaceful life of the Temple, I therefore arranged to retire to Thebes asking Queen Tausert to be graciously pleased to appoint "Bai" to be "the Keeper of the great seal of the whole land to its limits"¹¹ and so faithfully did he fulfil this difficult task that at his death he was honoured by being buried in the Tombs of the Kings at Thebes. The Queen was also graciously pleased to bestow on me the dignity of a princedom. Two years after her accession, during which time she kept in mourning to the memory of the late King, the Queen took compassion on and married her old admirer Siptah, one of the youngest sons of

Rameses the Great ; the union was a happy one, but the continual rebellions fostered by the descendants of Rameses II, caused trouble throughout the land, in so much that, in the words of Rameses III :—"the land of Egypt was overthrown. Every man was his own guide, they had no superiors. From the abundant years of the past, we had come to other times. The land of Egypt was in chiefships and in princedoms ; each killed the other among the noble and mean. Other times came to pass after that ; in years of scarcity, Arisu, a Syrian, was to them as Chieftain. He made the whole land tributary to him alone. He joined his companions with him, and seized their property, and they treated the gods in the same manner as they treated the people, and offerings were no longer presented in the shrines of the temples." ¹²

In the time of famine here alluded to, both Queen Tausert and the King endeavoured to relieve the distress, and it was while personally administering to the wants of the poor, that the King and Queen ¹³ were barbarously murdered, proving that the people were not yet sufficiently intelligent to be ruled by kindness, but should have been dominated by fear. On their death, Prince Set-neknt, a descendant of Rameses II, seized the control of the south, and after a brief year of continual warfare succeeded in subduing the whole land ; but no sooner had order been restored than King Set-neknt died, leaving as his successor his young son, Rameses III, a bold and determined prince, who, by his firmness and judicious actions, once more consolidated the kingdom, and although wars continued abroad, peace and order were restored at home ; once more manufactures and commerce flourish, our temples are again filled with worshippers, vineyards and cornfields cover the land and

personal security is re-established ; for which blessings I daily thank the gods, as I offer the sacrifices in our great Temple of "Epet," which I still control.

Much of my time is given to the education of my grandson Rameses-nekhtu,¹⁴ for the King has lately during the rebuilding of the palace and temple of Medinet Habu, suppressed the college of Ramessium, using that building as his harem.¹⁵

CHAPTER LIV

BENJAMIN REACHES THEBES—PTAHMES FINISHES HIS STORY

IT was during this period of peace and prosperity in the reign of Rameses III, that one evening, after the celebrations of the Temple were finished, I had promised to receive a late patient from the isolation hospital at Ta-n-terer,¹ who had been placed in quarantine before being allowed to enter the City of Thebes. I arranged to see the man while I rested in the temple gardens, for although I felt sure that all risk of contagion was passed, yet for the safety of others I take every precaution. After reading the letters which he had brought from the physicians at Ta-n-terer I allowed him to be admitted to my presence, but as he entered, seeing that he was not only prematurely white, but so wasted with illness that he could scarcely stand, I ordered the attendants to bring him a seat and then leave us.

The man told me he was a Hebrew, his name was Benjamin, and that as a lad he had been connected with the pillage of the royal tombs during the reign of Menenptah ; he briefly related how his father and uncle had lost their lives through the black plague, his subsequent experiences in the wilderness with the Israelites.

The reason of his return to the Nile was that he had hoped that all risk of contagion was now passed, and

that he would be enabled to recover the hidden jewels.

On entering the tomb, however, a deadly sickness had seized him, and before he had been able to collect any of the valuables, faintness had so nearly overpowered him, that it was with the utmost difficulty that he had been able to leave the sepulchre ; he had, however, on breathing the fresh air sufficiently revived to have strength to close the opening and reach the Nile, where the boatman awaited him, who, seeing that his passenger was seriously ill, had taken him direct to the hospital at Ta-n-terer.

When the man Benjamin was sufficiently recovered to be allowed to leave, he had come straight to Thebes, in order to confide his secret to me, and thus clear his conscience ; for the curse of the gods appeared to follow all those who had, up to the present, handled the stolen treasure.

Finding the man was destitute, I had him nourished and cared for until he regained his strength, and feeling that some good might ultimately come of it, I gave him employment as a gate-keeper.

During the following summer evenings, I often allowed him to attend me and recount the details of how the jewels had been stolen and I listened with interest to his descriptions of the wanderings of his nation under Moses.

Much here related I thus learnt, other events I already knew through the late King Seti, his royal Consort and other sources.

Benjamin often implores me to send a search party after the treasure, but I have promised my wife to occupy no more myself with the cursed hoard ; but I have left these records, in hope that in the distant future,

when the germs of contagion may have perished, these valuables may be of some service to my successors and I shall so secrete these writings that, until the very foundations of "the Holy of Holies" are undermined, their resting place will be unknown; when that day comes, doubtless, those in charge of the Temple will be in dire distress, and the treasure may then prove a blessing.

Such a time I can hardly imagine possible, as I look at the great and prosperous city around me.

Egypt is now the most powerful nation on the earth, and even should the strength of our country so decay, that the land be invaded, even then our religion and temples must survive, and Thebes, from its central position and its proximity to our great river, must I should think, always command a large and influential trade even as a distributing centre, neither is it likely that the many manufactures, for which Thebes is so famous, can all fail.

When such things happen, I, for one, shall be in the Great Amenti,² that Kingdom of Osiris, from which no traveller returns, yet if my remains are respected, then, the finder of these records will have the opportunity of possessing the chart placed in my vault, which will show the position of the tomb wherein the treasure lies hidden.

May this vast wealth, in the future, bring greater happiness to its possessors than it has done in the past.

CONCLUSION

ABOUT a fortnight had passed since Mr. Frank Roland had finished reading the translation of the papyrus roll sent by his friend Stafford, when one morning, while he and his sister were finishing their lunch a telegram arrived from Cairo, bearing the words :—"Successful, expect me next boat.—STAFFORD." Roland gave a shout of delight and passed the message to his sister and both appeared as thankful as if they themselves had found a fortune. But the next day they were somewhat anxious, when they saw the following cablegram dated from Cairo appearing in the newspapers :—

"Alarming outbreak of the black plague throughout the Nile valley."

The day after news came that Alexandria was infected—the scourge having evidently been introduced from Cairo. It then made its appearance at Port Said, Brindisi, Naples, Genoa, and Lyons. Three days after there was scarcely a town in the south which had not a case of infection.

Frank Roland, however, became seriously alarmed when the paper next day stated that an Englishman named Stafford staying at Quintain's Hotel, Paris, had been seized with the plague; and recommended that all communication with the continent should be immediately suspended.

Frank Roland and his sister looked at each other after reading this news, each having the same thought,

for George Stafford was a very dear and valued friend.

"It is no good of us both going," urged Frank, "you stay and I will bring him back as soon as possible"; but with this arrangement May Roland was not satisfied, and within a few hours, she and her brother were on their way to Paris.

Arriving there, they found their friend had been removed to a hospital, to which they were refused admittance; their only satisfaction being that they could arrange that he was provided with every comfort and were able to know frequently how the patient was progressing.

When at last, Stafford was not only out of danger, but free to leave, the little party set off for St. Germain, where, resting under the old trees, the good air and quiet, added to the cheering influence of his friends and the careful nursing of May Roland, soon helped the invalid to recover his strength.

A few weeks later, they were all back in England, surrounded by the comforts of the old Devonshire home, and there of an evening Stafford would recount details of how he recovered the treasure and smuggled it into Europe; but, as he often added, if he had only known that the germs of the fell disease still lived and would cause the death of thousands, he would have followed the advice of Ptahmes, and have left the cursed hoard alone.

Frank Roland still remains a bachelor, his sister, however, has been induced to take charge of her late patient for the remainder of his life, she at the same time has promised to still act as mistress of Glen-hope, as long as her brother wishes the combined household to remain beneath his roof.

Some of the jewels, it was decided should be offered to certain Museums at a nominal figure, and arrange-

ments were made at once to pay off the mortgages on the family estates.

Many consultations also take place as to how this enormous wealth may be laid out, so as to be of permanent benefit to mankind, and that thus in the future a blessing instead of a curse may come from "The Hidden Treasures of Egypt."



REFERENCE NOTES



REFERENCE NOTES

INTRODUCTION.

- | PAGE | NO. OF
NOTE | |
|------|----------------|--|
| xi | 1 | TEMPLE of Luxor, considered by Heeren and others to be a <i>palace</i> or civil edifice. See vol. I, p. 85, "British Museum,"— <i>Egyptian Antiquities</i> [pub., C. Knight, London].
There is, however, ample proof that at the southern end of the second court, stood a beautiful temple dedicated to Ammon. |
| xiii | 2 | 100 PIASTRE piece (the Egyptian £) = £1 os. 3½d. |
| xv | 3 | A CUBIT = 21 inches. |
| xv | 4 | EPET, the ancient name of Karnac, where stands the Great Temple of Ammon. |
| xx | 5 | THEBES. The damage done by the overflow of the river is chiefly due to two reasons:—the neglect of carrying out the almost perfect system of irrigation practised by the ancient Egyptians throughout the vast tracts of formerly fertile land bordering the river; and the accumulated deposits brought down from the mountains during so many centuries. About thirty years ago at Thebes, the river bed was over eight feet higher than in the time of Ptahmes (about 1300 B.C.). |

RECORDS OF PTAHMES.

SUB-TITLE PAGE.

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NOTE | |
|-------|----------------|--|
| xxvii | I | PTAHMES, being Piromis of Thebes (at that time, capital of the Empire) was not only Governor of the City and province, but from his position as Third Prophet of Ammon (Roi and Roma, the First and Second Prophets being too old to act), was, also, First Minister to the King, and Chief of the Government, which high position he held until Queen Tausert regained her throne, when on account of age, he relinquished it in favour of his kinsman, Bai; retaining only the position of High Priest of Ammon. |

This Prince was described as "Treasurer over the works of monuments"—"General"—"Living eyes and ears of the King"—See Leyden's *Egyptian Monuments*, v. iii, chap. xvii-xx; also Lepsius' *Königsbuch*, chap. xxv, p. 10-13; chap. xvi. p. 16; Florence Museum—*Catalogue No. 1600*; Cairo Museum—*Monuments Divers*, 62d.

PROLOGUE.

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|------|---|--|
| xxix | I | "PIROMIS" was the Chief Priest of all the temples of Thebes. |
| " | 2 | NET was the ancient Egyptian name of Thebes—the "No-Amon" of the Bible. |
| xxx | 3 | Zan, known as Tanis among Greeks, was the "Zoan," of the Bible. |
| " | 4 | The city of "Rameses," the immense store-city, built by RAMESES II, the site of which, |

at the time of writing, is still unknown ; it was the chief city of a district called Rameses, in the neighbourhood of Goshen. The city of Per-tum, also called Pi-Tum—the abode of the god Tum—corresponds with the Pithom of the Hebrews ; the site was discovered by M. Naville in 1883.

Per-bast, better known by its Greek name Bubastis, was called Pi-bast by the ancient Egyptians, after the Temple to the cat-headed goddess " Bast." This city was the " Pibeseth " of the Hebrews.

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|------|----|--|
| xxx | 5 | RAMESSIUM. For the building of this famous college and seat of learning known as Ramessium, at Thebes, Rameses II employed 3,000 men, 200 being masons, at the great quarries at " Silsilis " on the Nile (the Egyptian " Khenu "), to procure stone for this building. |
| xxx | 6 | ABU-SIMBEL is 25 miles north of Wady Halfa. |
| xxx | 7 | ABTU , better known as Abydos, is on the western bank of the Nile, near Arabat-el-Madfuneh ; it contains some very ancient tombs, besides the temple ruins. |
| xxxi | 8 | CHILDREN of Rameses II, see Lepsius in his <i>Denkmäler</i> , Vol. III, p. 179. A list is engraved at Wadi Seuba and on other temples. |
| xxxi | 9 | MUMMY of Khamis is in Cairo Museum. |
| xxxi | 9a | SERAPEUM , the burial place of sacred bulls. |
| xxxi | 10 | BANTANTA , the favourite daughter of |

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- Rameses II, was sometimes called "Anaitis" after the Syrian goddess.
- xxxi 11 MENENPTAH II reigned about 1320 B.C. Dates given by Brugsch differ by eighty years to those used by Mariette; and the dates on the Egyptian monuments differ by 200 years to those of the Hebrews, used in the Bible; for instance, the Exodus of Israelites according to Egyptian records was about 1300 B.C.; but by the Bible date, according to Usher, occurred in 1491. Erman considers that Menenptah was the fourteenth, not the thirteenth son of Rameses II, as is generally understood.
- xxxi 12 NEFERTARI. This Queen's tomb was discovered in 1904, in "The Valley of Queens' Tombs," Thebes.
- xxxi 13 "PA-ARI-SHEPS." Brugsch identifies with the name of Prosopis, the capital of which was "Niklow."
- xxxii 14 See obelisk at Karnac, also in Durmicher's "Historical Writings" and in Menenptah's funeral temple; see Petrie's *Six Temples*, also in the writings of Maspero and Mariette.
- xxxii 15 THE REMAINS of Rameses II are now at Cairo, taken from Dér-el-bahri, Thebes, in 1881. His statue at Tanis is now in Turin. His heart was found in a blue enamelled vase, among the Egyptian Treasures in the Louvre, Paris, 1806; brought back by Napoleon I, after his Egyptian campaign.

PAGE	NO. OF NOTE	
		His tomb is No. 7, " Valley of Kings' Tombs," Thebes.
CHAP. I. NARRATIVE OF PTAHMES.		
I 1 THEBES. "The buildings in the city of Thebes surpassed in magnificence all those of ancient and modern capitals." See <i>Life in Ancient Egypt</i> , Erman, p. 20.		
I	2	MILES. These distances given by <i>Herodotus</i> , vol. 2, p. 9, as 6,800, and 1,800 stadia, respectively; also measured by the French by order of Napoleon I, and proved correct; a stadia = 100 metres.
2	3	RAMESSIUM was the most famous college and seat of learning in ancient Egypt. The Temple of Kurna as built by Sethos I and Rameses II, was 518 ft. in length and 154 ft. in width.
2	4	COLOSSI. These statues commonly called the "Statues of Memnon," one head is said to be in the British Museum. Its removal from Thebes by Belzoni, see <i>British Museum Antiquities</i> , vol. I, 244-250.
		Before the erection of the great temples, the chief trade centre was on the eastern bank, the harbour quarter being close to the modern Luxor, which was then termed "Ueset," the name "Thebes" is derived from "Thaki" (the city), it being the city of "The most High." See Champollion's <i>EGYPTE sous les Pharaons</i> , 1218.
3	5	THEBES was known as the "City of a Hundred

- Gates." Each of the hundred divisions of the city having a separate entrance ; each also had to support 200 chariots. See Homer, *Iliad*, IX, p. 381.
- 3 5a " EPET," ancient Egyptian name for Karnac. The Great Temple of Ammon was built there, other chief temples at Karnac are dedicated to The " Divine Goddess Mut " and to her " BELOVED SON KHONS," thus forming " The Holy Triad " of deities protecting Thebes.
- 3 7 These obelisks were erected by Beken-Khonsu, architect to Rameses II. One of these is now in the Place de la Concorde, Paris.
- 4 8 EXTENT. The writings of Diodorus, Vol. I, p. 45, state 140 stadia.
- 4 9 ISLANDS. There were only two in the Nile at Thebes in former times, now there are several.
- CHAP. II.**
- 7 1 It was usual to employ runners with staves, who went before the Royal and private chariots in the cities. The custom still prevails in the East.
- CHAP. III.**
- 12 1 One class of the priests dedicated their lives to the study of medicine ; they were called " Pastophori " ; every disease had its special physicians.
- 2 2 Prince Seti was also known as " Sethos."

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CHAP. V.

- 23 i A shekel was 2/6. Rings of gold or silver were mostly used at this period (1300 B.C.), but the Hebrew coinage is mentioned for the convenience of readers; the talent was, however, already in use at Babylon. According to the Septuagint twenty pieces of gold was the price paid for Joseph.

CHAP. VI.

- 29 i "NEKHEB" was an important town and fortress on the Nile, about 40 miles due south of Thebes; it was noted as the chief place of worship of "Nekhebyt, Patron Goddess of the South," sometimes represented as a vulture, other times as a snake.

CHAP. VII.

- 31 i THE ROBBERIES from the tombs were a continual source of anxiety. In the reign of Rameses III, the tomb of Queen Ast-nefert, wife of Rameses II, was again entered. In the reign of Rameses IX eight thieves were caught; see *Papyrus Abbott* and *Papyrus Amherst*. During the reign of Rameses X, sixty persons were arrested; see *Papyrus Abbott* and *Papyrus Meyer*.

It was owing to these continual robberies, that the kings' mummies were dragged from tomb to tomb. The mummy of Rameses II was removed to the sepulchre of Seti I, this not being found safe, the remains of both kings were then placed in the vault of Amenhotep I. Finally, in desperation the State officials, confessing

openly, that they were powerless against the thieves, the royal remains were hidden during the darkness of night in an unknown deep rocky pit in the mountains of Dér-el-barhi, where they were only recently discovered by Loret. See Erman's *Life in Ancient Egypt*.

34

- 2 It was the practice to inter the most valued belongings, even furniture, in the tomb of the deceased. The chariot of Rameses II was found in his vault. The belief being that the "Ka" or Spirit visited the place of interment; food was also left at frequent intervals. Wooden statues of their slaves were, in many cases, added; and when a child died, its favourite toys were placed by the coffin.

A similar custom was practised by the Maoris of New Zealand, the most prized possessions of a dead chief were "tabu" or sacred, and thrown into a river, so that no other should use them.

34

- 3 The covers of these vases bear the heads of the four genii under whose protection the "viscera" were placed. See Erman's *Life in Ancient Egypt*.

CHAP IX.

- 50 1 A talent of silver is 3,000 shekels, and equals £375.
- 50 2 A talent of gold equals £648.
- 54 3 Books, or rather rolls of papyri manuscript, were largely imported from the book towns

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		of Kir-gath-Anab, Beth, Sopher, Adullam and Zidiputha, in Canaan ; where hundreds of scribes were employed in copying. The inhabitants of the cities of Canaan were highly cultured
		CHAP. X.
57	1	The reciters were a distinct order of priests in the Egyptian temples.
		CHAP. XI.
63	1	The utmost freedom was allowed to women in ancient Egypt, except to the " secluded," that is to say the slaves of the harem.
63	2	A crio-sphinx has a ram's head.
63	3	There were twelve entrances to the great Temple of " Epet " (Karnac).
63	4	This vast hypostyle hall is 338 feet in length, by 170 ft. in breadth, and had 134 columns arranged in nine parallel rows, one way, and sixteen the other ; the smaller pillars are nine feet, the other eleven feet in diameter.
64	5	The decorations in the interior of the hypostyle hall were of religious subjects <i>only</i> ; those on the outer walls illustrated the battles of Seti I and Rameses II.
64	6	These buildings were a mile and a half in circumference, the middle temple alone covering fifty-seven acres, the southern portion over 12 acres.
64	7	The temple attendants were often nobles and high personages taken in battle and given

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- by the King to the various sanctuaries, as perpetual slaves ; each was branded in some conspicuous part of the body.
- 64 8 These "golden gates" of the Temple were designed by Beken-Khonsu, chief architect to Rameses II, and First Prophet of Ammon. See his biography and statue in the Glyptothek at Munich ; also *Papyrus 47* at Berlin ; and Lepsius's *Denkmäler*, Vol. III, p. 200 a.
- 65 9 "Teraphim," the household gods of the Israelites (*Gen.*, chap. 35, 2-4), represented the human figure. Some writers assert these were life size, others that mummified human heads were first used and afterwards simple representations of these. A similar custom was practised among the Maories, and some fifty years ago mummified heads might be seen inserted in the trunks and large branches of trees of the "Holy Grove" in the Sacred Island of Lake Roto-Rua in the Northern Island (New Zealand).
- 66 10 The beauty and dignity expressed by the sculptor of "Khons" can yet be appreciated by existing photographs.
- 66 11 The sacred ram at Thebes was consecrated to "Ammon," as the "Apis" or holy bull at Memphis, was the living representative of the god "Ptah."
- 66 12 Hebrew names given to Jehovah.
- CHAP. XIII.
- 84 i The character and aims of Moses were, of

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		course, differently interpreted by Rachel and the Hebrews than by the Egyptians.
CHAP. XIX.		
116	1	Abu, better known as Elephantine.
116	2	The city of Thebes extended to the foot of the mountain ranges on the east and west of the Nile, a distance of nine miles from point to point.
118	3	Transmigration of souls was one of the tenets of the Egyptian religion.
CHAP. XXII.		
142	1	Ta-n-terer. Later known as Tentyra (present Dendereh), famous for its hospital founded in the sixth dynasty.
CHAP. XXIV.		
148	1	The oldest known manuscript, now in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. There was a large library at Thebes during the time of Ptahmes, the director being Amen-em-haut.
148	2	King Tet-ka-ra, sometimes spelt Kat-ka-ra.
149	3	A literal translation of the proverbs of Ptah-hetep is given below, much interesting information is given in the excellent work, <i>Ancient Egypt</i> , by Massey, Vol. I, p. 517. "No artist is endowed with the perfections to which he should not aspire." "He who perverts the truthfulness of his way in order to repeat only what produces pleasure in the words of every man, great or small, is a detestable person." "If thou art wise,

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look after thy house. Love thy wife without alloy. Fill her stomach, clothe her back, anoint her and fulfil her desires as long as she lives. It is a kindness which does honour to its possessor." "If thou art powerful, command only to direct." "To be absolute is to run into evil." "The gentle man penetrates all obstacles." "Teach the man of great position—that one may even do him honour." "If thou hast become great who once was small, and rich after having been poor, grow not hard of heart, because of thy prosperity; thou hast only become the steward of the good things of God."

- 150 4 The royal "Shendot" was a short skirt and apron worn by royalty.
- 150 5 One of these obelisks is now in the "Place de la Concorde," Paris.

CHAP. XXV.

- 151 1 The first court of this temple, owing to the substratum, had to diverge to the east, to the detriment of the uniformity of the building.
- 151 2 "Epet" was the ancient name of Karnac
- 151 3 See *Restoration of the Temple*, by Gnauth, chief non-commissioner for public buildings, copy of which appears in Erman's *Life in Ancient Egypt*, facing page 281.
- 151 4 Bull fights were amongst the entertainments of the ancient Egyptians. See *Wilkinson*, Vol. II, p. 75-76.

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152	5	The beautiful temple of Dér-el-Bahari was mostly built by this Queen ; see works published thereon by the Egypt Exploration Fund, giving views of the excavations.
152	6	Amenhophium has now been proved to be a different building to Ramessium. Some of the stone-work of Amenhophium was used by Menenptah II to build his memorial temple on the western side of Thebes. See <i>Description Générale de Thèbes</i> , Section III.
155	7	The city of Akhet-aten, was the ancient name of Tell-el-amarna.
157	8	This truly happened during the inquisition. (Translator's note.)
158	9	According to Manetho the Hebrew lepers numbered over 80,000, but this is contradicted by Josephus, however, who declared that this record of Manetho is false.
CHAP. XXVI.		
161	1	Better known as " On " or " Heliopolis."
162	2	For further descriptions of Religious festivals, see Lepsius's <i>Denkmäler</i> , Vol. III, p. 14.
163	3	The form of the Trinity was first introduced by the Egyptians, and was observed in most of the temples ; each " Nome " or province being under the protection of the district " Triad."
164	4	A " Nome " was a department or province.
CHAP. XXVII.		
165	1	The walls on each side of this colonnade are

- decorated with reliefs by Tut-anck-Amen, of the great festival celebrated at Luxor on New Year's Day, but his name was replaced by that of his successor, Haremheb.
- 166 2 His tomb is at Thebes on the western bank.
- 167 3 The Hebrew lepers were kept at Avaris.

CHAP. XXVIII.

- 172 1 This palace covering four acres has been excavated by Mr. Newberry ; Mr. Robb de Peyser Titus, an American, who bore the expenses, has written an interesting work on the subject.
- 174 2 QEBTI, better known as Coptos ; Ta-n-terer, the Greek Tentyra ; and Ab-tu afterwards called Abydos.
- 174 3 AKHET-ATEN, the ruined city which was destroyed by an insurrection of the inhabitants caused by the priests of Ammon, on the death of the King. It was near the present village of Tell-el-Amarna. M. Flinders Petrie generously presented a Museum at this place.
- 174 4 KHEMNU was the " Hermopolis Magna " of the Greeks. Men-nefer the well-known city of Memphis.
- 174 5 " ANU " was the celebrated city of Heliopolis the " On " of the Bible.
- 174 6 " HET-TA-HER-AB " was the " Athribis " of the Greeks. Perbast, later called Bubastis. " Zan " afterwards known as Tanis.
- 174 7 MOSES, according to Biblical records, was

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		eighty years of age at this time. See <i>Josephus</i> , <i>Antq.</i> , Book 2, Chap. IX. According to historians the Exodus took place eight years after the death of Rameses the Great. If the Biblical dates are correct, the Pharaoh, whose daughter protected Moses, could not be the daughter of Rameses II, who died aged 86 (see <i>Petrie</i>), as he would have been only fourteen years of age at the time of the birth of Moses. It is, therefore, probable that it was his father, Seti I, a wise and good king, who had a daughter named Hentmara.
175	8	"ANU," otherwise On.
175	9	Moses was brought up and educated as a priest of "Osiris." See <i>Manetho</i> .
175	10	The information here recorded; see <i>Josephus</i> , <i>Antq.</i> Book II, Chap. X.
175	11	Information recorded by Strabo, Book XVI, pp. 771, 786, and Book XVII, p. 821. In Strabo's time, the island mentioned was called "Meroe."
176	12	See <i>Irenæus. ap. Grab.</i> p. 472.
177	13	PI-KEHERET is better known under its Greek name "Arsinoe," it was on the Red Sea, before it receded, position believed to be south-west of Lake Timsah.
177	14	PER-TUM is the "Pithom" of the Bible.
CHAP. XXIX.		
178	1	MENNEFER. Thebes and Memphis.
181	2	Staves. These were live serpents in a state of

catalepsy. This is often practiced by the snake charmers in the east. When in a state of catalepsy the snakes are perfectly unconscious and rigid. The same effect can be produced on human beings by hypnotism.

It is also quite frequent for snakes to swallow other snakes; when danger threatens the mother swallows her young till safety is assured; and what has recently taken place in the Zoological Gardens proves that the larger snakes will often swallow serpents as large as themselves.

The trick of Aaron's budding rod is known to every tyro.

CHAP. XXX.

- 184 1 The mounds showing the former position of the Temple may be traced near the modern village of Mitrahine. See *History of Egypt*, Brugsch Bey.
- 186 2 These details are more fully given in *Struggle of Nations* by Maspero, and Brugsch, p. 21.
- 186 3 The statue of Rameses II at Ramessium, was thrown down by Cambyses.

CHAP. XXXI.

- 187 1 QUEEN AST-NEFERT, the first wife of Menenptah, is the only one historically recognised.
- 187 2 The vanquished King of Libya, Maurmey, was the son of King Did.
- 188 3 MENENPTAH II, on the approach of the Libyan forces against him, shut himself up in Memphis, under the pretence that the

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| | | gods in a dream had ordered him to do so ; he, however, took the credit of the victory. |
| 190 | 4 | Prince Seti was at an early age married to Princess Takhat. |
| CHAP. XXXIII. | | |
| 195 | 1 | These enormous gateways were generally used as the entrances to the temples and palaces. |
| | 2 | Every large household had its harem, and the inmates were careful that music and song should never fail at any feast, secular or sacred. See Erman's <i>Life in Ancient Egypt</i> , p. 250. |
| 196 | 2a | WOMEN also appeared before their masters to perform gymnastic feats, or to dance. No feast was considered complete without dancing. See p. 245, Erman's <i>Life in Ancient Egypt</i> , and in Wilkinson's <i>Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians</i> , Vol. II, pp. 54-68. See engravings on <i>Theban Tomb</i> , British Museum, and Wilkinson, Vol. I, pp. 439-443 ; also Plate XI ; and in the works of Perrot, p. 701, <i>Roselline</i> , pp. 96, 98, 99. |
| CHAP. XXXIV. | | |
| 202 | 1 | RAMESES II had not the highly refined and intellectual face of his father Seti I ; both mummies are in the Cairo Museum. |
| 202 | 2 | AMEN-MESES was called Sotep-en-ra ; Setenekht was termed Sotep-en-ra-mery Amen, son of Ra-mery-Amen. The title of Menen-ptah was " Ba-n-ra-mery-Amen." |

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203	2a	BRONZE STATUE of Tausert is in the Museum of Athens.
203	2b	Flinders Petrie suggests that the mother of Tausert was Bantanta, the favourite daughter of Rameses II, and not by Meryt-Amen. In either case, she would be heiress to the throne in her own right.
203	3	This <i>Ast-nefert</i> , wife of Menenptah, must not be confused with the Queen <i>Ast-nefert</i> , wife of Rameses II.
203	4	Historians differ as to the mother of Tausert.
CHAP. XXXV.		
207	1	By recent interpretation the three days mentioned in <i>Exodus</i> , chap. x, par. 22-23. "Neither rose any from his place, for three days," is supposed to refer to the <i>terror</i> caused by the sudden darkness, not to the actual duration of the eclipse.
CHAP. XXXVII.		
217	1	The leader of the dance was called "Superintendent of all the beautiful pleasures of the King."
CHAP. XLII.		
241	1	"PHARMUTH" is about the end of March.
CHAP. XLV.		
264	1	PER-TUM, the Biblical Pithom, the site of which was discovered by M. Naville.
265	2	HORA, captain of the guards and commander of the fortress and district of Per-tum, was afterwards made Prince of Kush, in the reign of Siptah.

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CHAP. XLVI.

- 276** 1 To swear by "the bodies of your ancestors" was one of the most binding of oaths among the Egyptians.

CHAP. XLVII.

- 285** 1 "PASHT," the lioness-headed goddess.
- 286** 2 See MAP showing the position formerly covered by the head of the gulf.

CHAP. XLVIII.

- 288** 1 PI-KEHERET (the Hebrew "Pi-hahiroth"), mentioned in *Exodus*, chap. xiv, par. 2; was a town situated on the western shores of Lake Timsah, this lake and the "Bitter Lakes" being all that is left to mark the former position of the gulf; the shallow water having receded as far as Suez. See MAP.
- 290** 2 "MIGDOL" was the general term used for certain large fortresses, situated at the boundaries of Egypt.

CHAP. XLIX.

- 296** 1 By addressing the Monarch by his name, Ptahmes shows here that he no longer considered Menenptah as the King; it being contrary to Egyptian etiquette to address Pharaoh by name.

CHAP. LI.

- 305** 1 "APIS," this sacred bull, kept in the Temple at Memphis, was the divine emblem of the god "Ptah," and in which the god was supposed to manifest himself on earth.

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CHAP. LII.

- 311 1 The phenomenon of the incoming tide being held back by the force of a hurricane, is still prevalent in other parts of Egypt. See M. Naville's *Memoirs*.
- 314 2 "LAKE TIMSAH." It was a little south of this lake, between it and the Bitter Lakes ; that MM. Ebers and Naville consider that the Israelites crossed the Gulf ; the place is now a dry plain of sand. See Map.

CHAP. LIII.

- 317 1 MENENPTAH reigned according to Manetho, eight years ; but Maspero considers twenty years to be more correct. His tomb is No. 8 in "The Valley of King's Tombs," Thebes. His mummy was discovered by Loret in 1881 in the coffin of Set-netcht, which lay in the tomb of Amenophis II. It is now in the Cairo Museum.
- 317 2 When Seti was Crown Prince, the story of "The Two Brothers" was dedicated to him by Anna. Odes in honour of his coronation are still existent.
- 317 3 In the *Anastasi papyri*, folios 4, 5, 6. Qagabu, the treasurer, wrote a poem to celebrate the event. It commences :—
 "Incline thine ear towards me, thou Rising Sun," ending
 "Thou King of Beauty, giving breath to all."
 See translation in Erman's *Life in Ancient Egypt*, pp. 66, 67.

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318	4	SETI II was fifty-six at the time of his succession.
318	5	This temple erected to the memory of Seti II, stands on the north-western side of the first great court of the "Temple of Epet."
319		See <i>The Struggle of Nations</i> , by Maspero.
319	6	The statuette of this priest, Iaire, is in the Louvre, Paris.
319	7	THE TOMB of King Seti II is No. 15 in the Valley of Kings' Tombs, Thebes; the decorations were magnificently commenced, but owing to his untimely end, were left unfinished. His mummy and coffin were found in the tomb of Amenhotep II, where they had been conveyed for safety; they are now in the Cairo Museum.
320	8	THE TOMB of Amen-meses is No. 10, "Valley of Kings' Tombs," Thebes.
320	9	This statue of King Seti II, formerly at Zan (Tanis) is now at Cairo.
320	10	See Lepsius, <i>Denkmäler</i> , Vol. III, p. 202.
320	11	"BAI," Keeper of the Great Seal, see Lepsius, <i>Denkmäler</i> , Vol. III, p. 202 a. His tomb is No. 13, "Valley of Kings' Tombs."
321	12	For the rising of Arisu, the Syrian; see <i>Harris papyrus</i> , p. 75.
322	13	QUEEN TAUSERT was not buried in the Queens' tombs, but with her husband, Siptah, in the Valley of Kings' Tombs, No. 14.

14 RAMESES-NEKTU became High Priest of Ammon at Thebes, during the reign of Rameses III ; his son, Amenhotep, married Princess Ast, daughter of Rameses VI, and ascended the throne of Rameses XII ; Amen-hotep was the first king of the XXI dynasty, and was succeeded by his son, Herhor, High Priest of Ammon, probably the first of the Priest Kings.

15 RAMESSIUM. See *Pleyte papyrus*, at Turin.

1 The site of the city of Ta-n-terer, famous for its hospital founded during the VI Dynasty, was near the present "Dendereh," on the Nile.

2 The "Hades" of the Egyptians ; the resting place of souls after death.



AUTHOR'S NOTE

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RECENT excavations and the discovery by the late Earl of Carnarvon and Mr. Carter of the tomb of Tutankamen (a Pharaoh of the XVIII Dynasty) have re-awakened so much interest in Ancient Egypt, throughout the world, that many may wish to know more about this remarkable race, which reached such a high state of civilisation, that in many of the Arts, they obtained a perfection which modern nations have not yet been able to equal.

In this story of the XIX Dynasty, during which events of even greater general interest occurred than in the preceding one, every endeavour has been made to give an accurate description of the buildings and customs of the people in Egypt at that period, for which information the writer is greatly indebted to the scholarly and interesting works of Ancient and Modern writers, to which for further information the reader is referred to the Notes at the end of this volume.

The writer is also indebted for information from the publications of the Egypt Exploration Fund, from which works the reader might glean very interesting knowledge.

By the kind courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum, engravings are given from ornaments from the Temple of Denderah, and the writer, at the same time, wishes to express his thanks for much useful information so kindly given by the Director of the Egyptian Department.

The Government of Egypt, during the XVIII and XIX Dynasties, was mostly in the hands of the Priesthood of Ammon, which often controlled even the actions of the Pharaohs.

The death of Rameses II must have caused the priests considerable anxiety, for his son, Menenptah II, inherited the vices of his father, but neither his bravery, energy, nor shrewdness; he was obstinate, cruel and indolent. Moreover, neither he, nor the Crown Prince, took but little interest in religious or State affairs, and the erection of any more temples or public buildings was forbidden.

The priests remembered what had happened in a similar case. When Amenhotep IV ascended the throne, he had the sagacity to see the utter folly of his father and predecessors, in allowing such fabulous amounts from the public funds to be squandered in erecting and endowing so many colossal temples to innumerable gods, each of which had a multitude of useless priests, living on the industry of the people. He had, therefore, promptly stopped this source of waste, and also suppressed the temples of the gods and their priests, by decreeing that only "One God Alone"—The Creator, was to be recognised. And so that the people might be reminded by the daily manifestation of his power, he re-established the worship of "The Spirit of the Sun"; the Sun being one of the most prominent sources by which the Divinity distributes his blessings of Light, Warmth and Life, over the face of the earth.

Should either Menenptah or the Crown Prince realise the enormous portion of the country's revenue, and that of private persons, which went to the upkeep of the temples and priests who produced **NOTHING** in return, might not they consider that the Hebrew religion

might be more beneficial for the State and the people? If this happened what would become of the Priesthood? It was probably this fear, which caused them to stir up such bitter enmity between the two nations.

The religion of the Israelites at this time, was of the simplest and purest form. They had neither temples nor priests, every head of the family acting as priest in his own household; their chief doctrine being :—" To do good one to another," which simple creed, it is said, even after all these centuries, is a strong characteristic among them.

It was only after Moses had achieved his ambition, that the Hebrew religion lost its simplicity by his instituting the Priesthood, in order to dominate the people.

It is no doubt true, that the Israelites, whilst working on the Public Relief Works, were in a terrible condition. To be herded together would without doubt produce a state, which our own soldiers experienced in the late Great War.

In regard to leprosy, this frightful disease was unfortunately but too prevalent in the East, and contagion terribly rapid. Avaris, where it is said they were interned, was the ancient capital of Northern Egypt in the time of the Hyksos. It was in the neighbourhood of Tanis.

The Israelites must have suffered terribly in Egypt. They were evidently not allowed to bear arms, neither does there seem to be any record of their being trained as artisans, but merely as labourers, and when not required were probably sold as slaves, so as to free the country from the cost of their keep.

It is easy to imagine that when Moses found that the Priesthood wished the Israelites to leave the country,

he quickly seized the opportunity of heading the movement and stirring up his compatriots.

But whether the Hebrews were justified in adopting the means they employed to reach that end, which culminated in the terrible massacres of the first-born throughout the land, and declaring that "*it was by the hand of God,*" is another matter. The views expressed thereon in the story, are, of course, those of an Egyptian High Priest.

The dates, as given, can be only approximative, when even such leading authorities as Brugsh and Maspero, in some cases differ by two hundred years; and Usher coolly gives the date of The Creation as 4004 B.C., when we have the authoritative scientific evidence, as announced lately at University College, London, that the well-preserved human remains recently discovered in the caves in South Africa clearly prove that MAN had reached a state of very high intellectual development over *Two Hundred thousand years ago*;—and probably ages before that!

In many cases, the Grecian or more modern names of places have been substituted, and ancient Egyptian expressions of the period altered; notes of explanation, historical authorities quoted, and reference notes marked by numbers will be found at the end of volume.

The state religion and government were distinct only in name. The country was divided into forty provinces, each of which were supposed to be under the protection of three distinct gods, each province having its own triad; it was ruled by a Prince or Governor, who was often the High Priest, and was responsible to the King for the order, and the levying of men, etc. Above all these were the "Prophets of Ammon" who practically ruled the country and were the Chief

Ministers of Pharaoh, Supreme Head of the State.

The capital at the time of Ptahmes was " Net-Amen " —the city (of the god) Amen ; this is the city " No " or " No-Amon " of the Bible, and afterwards known as Thebes.

Many cities, rivers and places were called by different names, as is explained in the reference notes : for instance :

Egyptian	Biblical	More modern
Men-nefert	Noph	Memphis
A'ter-Aa,	Mitsraïm	Nile
Anu	On	Heliopolis
Abtu		Abydos
<i>et cetera.</i>		



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